
BILL NO: House Bill 1364
TITLE: Health Care Freedom of Conscience Act
COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations
HEARING DATE: March 11, 2022
POSITION: **OPPOSE**

The Women's Law Center of Maryland opposes HB 1364, which would severely negatively impact women in our State.

Women are entitled to the full array of health care surrounding reproduction and gynecological care. Women should be free to control and plan their own lives. HB 1364 would seriously impact access to such health care services such as contraception, fertility treatment, or abortion care. The bill would allow an insurer to refuse to cover such services on the basis of religious, moral, or ethical objections. Many people are required to use the health care provided by their employer, but they could be forced to do that and not be covered for basic needs. The exemptions provide in HB 1364 are much broader than the religious exemptions generally found in current law. Maryland women and families would be at risk for losing coverage of essential services.

Restrictions that prevent women from getting the care they need jeopardize their health and well-being. Instead of blocking access to the full range of essential reproductive health care, the General Assembly must advance measures that respect women's dignity, and their right to make these personal decisions based on their own circumstances. Maryland must ensure that women have the information and resources they need to make decisions that are best for themselves and their families. Therefore, we oppose HB 1364 and urge an unfavorable report.

The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a private, non-profit, membership organization that serves as a leading voice for justice and fairness for women. It advocates for the rights of women through legal assistance to individuals and strategic initiatives to achieve systemic change.