



Testimony for the Health and Government Operations Committee

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HB 937 - Abortion Care Access Act

FAVORABLE

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The ACLU of Maryland (ACLU) believes that women and others who can become pregnant have a fundamental right to make decisions about whether or not to have a child without political interference. Further, the ACLU is supportive of efforts to expand access to abortion services, especially for people of color and for those who are low-income. To that end, the ACLU supports HB 937 - Abortion Care Access Act.

Due to the more than 500 hundred medically unnecessary, politically motivated restrictions on abortion that hostile states have enacted in the past decade, Maryland has been a destination and refuge for patients who have been forced to leave their home state to obtain abortion care. As surrounding states pass laws to make abortion more prohibitive, our state will see more out-of-state visitors in search of care. The influx of those seeking this essential health care will increasingly affect the availability of services for residents in Maryland. Access to abortion care is already limited due to provider shortages and restrictive policies in many insurance plans.

HB 937 would address these capacity issues by expanding access to abortion care in Maryland. Specifically, the bill would allow advanced practice clinicians (APCs), including nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and other qualified, licensed health care professionals, to provide a variety of procedural abortion services. Currently, only physicians licensed by the state are authorized to perform abortion services, even though APCs' scope of practice routinely authorizes them to provide identical care for miscarriage management. California, Hawaii, Maine, Massachusetts, and neighboring Virginia have enacted similar legislation¹.

HB 937 will also establish a clinical training program for clinicians interested in providing abortion care. This trailblazing measure will ensure that clinicians in settings that prohibit comprehensive reproductive health services have the opportunity to receive training for a wide range of reproductive

¹ Ca. Bus. & Prof. Code § 2725.4; Act 3, Session Laws of Hawaii 2021; Me. Rev. Stat. tit. 22, § 1598; Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 112, §§ 12K-M (2020); Va. Code Ann. §18.2-72 (2021)

health services, including abortion care. In addition, it will help ensure a robust and diverse pipeline of qualified health care professionals who are able to provide culturally competent care to underserved communities.

By not taking action on this bill, the current strain on Maryland providers will be exacerbated. More importantly, people seeking abortion care will face even more barriers to receiving high quality, time sensitive, essential services. For these reasons, the ACLU asks for a favorable report on HB 937.

