

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and the members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

My name is Dr. Arielle Garber, and I am a chief resident physician living and practicing in Baltimore City. I provide full-spectrum obstetrical and gynecologic care.

I am here today to support this bill as a provider, a woman, and a former college student. Senate Bill 341 offers our state's students – both my patients and your constituents – the education, opportunity, and support to make their own decisions regarding reproductive health and safety, pregnancy, and parenting.

Rather than providing a list of statistics, and given that I will be happy to later field any clinical questions that you might have, I would instead like to share the story of one of my patients: for her privacy, I will call her Olivia. Already a mother, Olivia worked part time to support her four-year-old son and was taking courses to work towards a degree when she discovered that she was pregnant. She had not used contraception in the month surrounding her pregnancy, had little understanding of or access to emergency contraception, and was in my prenatal care office grappling with the difficult decision to continue or terminate her pregnancy. She knew that the financial burden of a second child and the health burden of pregnancy would likely preclude her from reaching her academic goals. I spent 45 minutes discussing her options with her and empowering her to make her own decision, but if Olivia were here today I am certain that she would tell you that she would have wished to not have been in my office at all.

The provisions outlined in this bill could have helped Olivia at each step along her journey, from the opportunity to obtain contraception (whether over-the-counter or prescribed), to immediate access to barrier and emergency contraception, and even to early referral to reproductive health specialists for appropriate and comprehensive pregnancy counseling. Students like Olivia often feel stigma or encounter resistance when trying to purchase emergency contraception due to the misconception that this safe and well-tolerated medication causes abortion. As a medical provider, I would like to underscore that emergency contraception prevents pregnancy before it occurs; having it readily available at a health center or in a vending machine on campus could help to reduce unintended pregnancy and increase awareness surrounding safe sexual practices.

Senate Bill 341 empowers our students to take control of their reproductive wellbeing. I hope that you will join us in its support.

Thank you,

Arielle W. Fein Garber, MD