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SB0947

March 6, 2024

TO: Members of the Senate Finance Committee
FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations
RE: Senate Bill 947 – Abortion Care Access Grant Program and Fund - Establishment
POSITION: FAVORABLE

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Klausmeier, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 947.

This bill will ensure access to safe abortion care by extending grant opportunities available to family planning programs to abortion clinic providers statewide. SB 947 will and support clinics in their ability to protect their patients, staff, and volunteers by funding security staffing and other security measures. This is important for ensuring that abortion is accessible, as accessibility is what transforms a right simply a theory to a reality. “There is no choice where there is no access.”ⁱ

Abortion services are one of many reproductive health services that abortion clinics provide; annual exams, contraception, testing and treatment for sexually transmitted diseases, education, as well as breast and cervical cancer screenings are often also available. In fact, reproductive health providers are often the primary source of care for some people, particularly women.ⁱⁱ Connecting a person to abortion care is a connection to healthcare and choice.

Following the June 2022 Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health decision that ended Roe, fewer and fewer Americans can get abortion care in their own state due to an increase in bans and restrictions. Patients are traveling to states that border those with total abortion bans or those that begin early in gestation to receive abortion care. The proportion of patients traveling to other states to obtain an abortion has **nearly doubled** since 2020, reaching nearly one in five in the first half of 2023, compared to one in 10 in 2020.ⁱⁱⁱ

Maryland could easily become an island of safe, accessible abortion care. West Virginia has completely banned abortion with very limited exceptions.^{iv} While abortion remains legal in Pennsylvania and Virginia, it is restricted.^{v,vi} Political volatility could change the landscape of accessibility within these states, disconnecting more patients from the healthcare that they want and need. As Maryland strives to remain a safe haven for reproductive justice, it must sustain and safeguard comprehensive reproductive care. For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on SB 947.

ⁱ SisterSong. (n.d.). Reproductive Justice. Retrieved from <https://www.sistersong.net/reproductive-justice/>

ⁱⁱ Hall, K. S., Harris, L. H., & Dalton, V. K. (2017). Women's Preferred Sources for Primary and Mental Health Care: Implications for Reproductive Health Providers. *Women's Health Issues*, 27(2), 196–205. <https://doi-org.proxy-hs.researchport.umd.edu/10.1016/j.whi.2016.09.014>

ⁱⁱⁱ Forouzan, K., Friedrich-Karnik, A., & Maddow-Zimet, I. (2023). The High Toll of US Abortion Bans: Nearly One in Five Patients Now Traveling Out of State for Abortion Care. Retrieved from <https://www.guttmacher.org/2023/12/high-toll-us-abortion-bans-nearly-one-five-patients-now-traveling-out-state-abortion-care>

^{iv} West Virginia Code Ch. 16 §16-2R-3. Retrieved from <https://code.wvlegislature.gov/16-2R-3/>

^v Virginia Code Title 18.2 Ch. 4 § 18.2-71. Retrieved from <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacodefull/title18.2/chapter4/article9/>

^{vi} Pennsylvania Code Title 18 Ch. 32. Retrieved from <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/LI/consCheck.cfm?txtType=HTM&ttl=18&div=0&chpt=32>