



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

P.O. Box 34047, Bethesda, MD 20827

www.womensdemocraticclub.org

**House Bill 1412 - Abortion Care Access Grant Program and Fund - Establishment
Health and Government Operations Committee - March 8, 2024
SUPPORT**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2024 legislative session. WDC is one of Maryland's largest and most active Democratic clubs with hundreds of politically active members, including many elected officials.

WDC urges the passage of HB1412 Abortion Care Access Grant Program and Fund – Establishment. This bill will establish a special non-lapsing fund to provide operating and capital grants to abortion care providers for the purpose of protecting the security of their patients, staff, and volunteers. This grant program will be funded by appropriated funds and excess funds that have been set aside for abortion coverage as required by the Affordable Care Act (ACA). ACA requires health insurers, non-profit health service plans, and health maintenance organizations to set aside, in a segregated account, money collected from premiums for abortion coverage. For the fiscal year 2025, the Governor shall appropriate at least \$1,000,000 for this program. Beginning in fiscal year 2026, the Governor's annual budget shall appropriate at least 75 percent of the year-end balance in the ACA set aside accounts. This grant program will be administered by the Maryland State Department of Health. The Department will coordinate with federal, state, and local law enforcement to create security plans for specific providers.

The U.S. Supreme Court's Dobbs decision ended a woman's right to an abortion. Last year the Maryland Legislature passed a number of State bills to protect a woman's right to reproductive health care in Maryland, including abortion, and made Maryland a safe-harbor for women from other States who seek this care. However, since the Dobbs decision, [abortion clinic violence and harassment has increased nationally](#). Anti-choice advocates from other States are also targeting Maryland. Although Maryland law prohibits the obstruction of clinic entrances, the current law does not provide for any kind of safe access zone around them. Women and their providers need protections to ensure safe and free access to reproductive health clinics without harassment and intimidation.

We ask for your support for HB1412 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report. Passage of this legislation will enable clinics to protect women who are seeking reproductive health care and their caregivers.

Tazeen Ahmad
WDC President

Ginger Macomber
WDC Working Families Committee

Cynthia Rubenstein
Co-Chair, WDC Advocacy