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TESTIMONY ON HB858 - UNFAVORABLE

Health - Abortion - Ultrasound and Waiting Period

My name is Lindy Wittenberg, and I have worked and volunteered in reproductive freedom and rights policy for over four years. On behalf of Pro-Choice Maryland Action, I am submitting this testimony in opposition to HB858 - "Health - Abortion - Ultrasound and Waiting Period".

HB858 would create barriers of access to time-sensitive abortion care by mandating ultrasounds be performed for all people seeking abortions in Maryland, and establish a waiting period for all seeking abortion by "prohibiting a qualified provider from performing or inducing an abortion on a pregnant woman within a certain period of time after the woman receives certain ultrasound imaging."

Imagine this: you are a mother of three (the majority of those who seek abortions are already parents), but you live in a state where abortions are illegal. You're already working hard to put food on the table, and another kid would be financially infeasible for your family. When you find out you are pregnant, the closest abortion clinic is in Maryland, a four hour drive away. You and your partner decide to travel together to get an abortion procedure done. Without waiting periods, you would still have to take a day off of work, find someone (or pay them) to cover childcare, and drive 4 hours to and from your appointment. Without a waiting period and mandatory ultrasound, this is already a burdensome prospect in terms of finances and time. With a waiting period and mandatory ultrasound, a patient would have to spend extra time in the clinic, and face the potential burden of extra travel time or paying for an overnight stay.

This is a hypothetical situation that I have just illustrated, but it is a very real one for millions of people who do not have access to abortion and rely on abortion-friendly states like Maryland for abortion care. Low-income folks are especially burdened by these waiting periods because of the cost burdens waiting periods cause. In addition to creating barriers to access abortion care, mandated waiting periods and ultrasounds are not medically required to make abortion care safer.

This bill would make care less accessible, and cause worse outcomes for not only Marylanders, but all who come to Maryland to seek abortion care. We know from well-conducted research that limiting abortion access contributes to worse maternal health outcomes, and worse mental and physical health outcomes. Since *Roe v. Wade* was overruled in 2022, it has been harder to access abortion care in America, and the accessibility of abortion care is shrinking day by day. Maryland must remain a state where abortion is accessible and free of barriers. **On behalf of Pro-Choice Maryland Action, I strongly urge this committee to return an unfavorable support on HB858.**