

**Committee:** House Health and Government Operations Committee

**Bill:** House Bill 1051 – Maternal Health – Assessments, Referrals, and Reporting (Maryland Maternal Health Act)

**Hearing Date:** March 6, 2024

**Position:** Support

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The Women’s Law Center of Maryland (WLC) supports *House Bill 1051 – Maternal Health – Assessments, Referrals, and Reporting (Maryland Maternal Health Act)* with amendments. The legislation provides for a public health approach in addressing high rates of maternal morbidity and mortality in Maryland.

Severe maternal morbidity in Maryland has risen from 69.8 to 88.2 cases per 10,000 deliveries between 2010 and 2022 in Maryland.<sup>i</sup> The Women’s Law Center of Maryland is concerned about the impact on all communities, including Black and brown communities which have higher rates of maternal morbidity and mortality. When compared to Non-Hispanic White women in Maryland, non-Hispanic Black women face a 65% higher risk of severe maternal morbidity.<sup>ii</sup>

We request two sets of amendments that we believe align with the intent of the legislation:

Amendment 1: We understand that the sponsor is considering submitting an amendment to establish an implementation workgroup for the bill. We would like to request inclusion of two organizations on the workgroup with expertise in reproductive health and intimate partner violence. We believe this will be helpful as some pregnant individuals will be an elevated risk for intimate partner violence. Please add the following members to the workgroup:

“MARYLAND NETWORK AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE”

“WOMEN’S LAW CENTER OF MARYLAND”

Amendment 2: We ask for a clarifying amendment to reflect that the sharing of protected health information must comply with applicable state and federal privacy laws. This amendment will provide clarity to stakeholders involved in implementation.

Insert “IN A MANNER CONSISTENT WITH STATE AND FEDERAL HEALTH PRIVACY LAWS” after the word “FORM” in line 22 on page 2, in line 12 on page 3, and in line 13 on page 4.

Thanks so much for the work of the sponsor and Committee on this important bill. If we can provide any additional information, please contact Robyn Elliott at [relliott@policypartners.net](mailto:relliott@policypartners.net).

**The Women’s Law Center of Maryland is a private, non-profit, legal services organization that serves as a leading voice for justice and fairness for women. It advocates for the rights of women through legal assistance to individuals and strategic initiatives to achieve systemic change, working to ensure physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy for women in Maryland.**

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<sup>i</sup> <https://mdmom.org/maternal-morbidity-surveillance>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10467219/>