



Maryland Section

TO: The Honorable Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair
Members, House Health and Government Operations Committee
The Honorable Barrie S. Ciliberti

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
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DATE: March 15, 2024

RE: **OPPOSE** – House Bill 858 – *Health – Abortion – Ultrasound and Waiting Period*

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Maryland Section (MDACOG), which represents the Maryland physicians who serve the obstetrical and gynecological needs of Maryland women and their families, **opposes** House Bill 858.

House Bill 858 requires a patient to view ultrasounds and imposes a waiting time before an abortion that would create burdens and obligations upon women and abortion providers, all for no medical purpose. While the bill provides exceptions for women who have become pregnant as a result of rape or incest, it does not create exceptions for medical emergencies, psychological and emotional harm, or the risk of self-inflicted harm. The bill also imposes a fine upon medical professionals who do not abide by the requirements, which would create a chilling effect on access to needed medical services.

House Bill 858 would interfere with communication that should be between a doctor and a patient and imposes undue burdens on a woman's right to access abortion that is counter to the standard of care. The legislation gives no consideration to individual patients' medical circumstances or their reason for choosing to terminate the pregnancy.

Mandatory waiting periods that impose delays on women who have already made the decision to have an abortion serve no useful purpose and create substantial, often harmful, obstacles. Due to the severe and escalating shortage throughout this country of doctors who perform abortions, a mandatory waiting period often requires women to make at least two trips to the clinic. Women are forced to take multiple days off from work, risk loss of employment, lose wages, leave families unattended or arrange for costly childcare, or travel out of state. Government imposed delays increase risks to women's health.

The requirements set forth in House Bill 858 are not tied to any medical purpose, nor are they aimed at ensuring women are provided necessary medical information. Rather, the results of this legislation would create a negative, undue burden upon a woman's ability to access abortion care. An unfavorable report is requested on House Bill 858.