



## **OPPOSITION STATEMENT AND REQUEST FOR AMENDMENT**

SB1158, Sacred Places of Worship Act  
 Laura Bogley, JD, Executive Director  
 Maryland Right to Life

On behalf of our Board of Directors and members across the state, we seek your amendment on **Senate Bill 1158**, which would provide protections against acts of violence for only certain medical facilities *while excluding others*. Maryland Right to Life denounces all acts of physical violence. We seek your amendment to qualify that this act would prohibit acts of PHYSICAL violence and not be weaponized against free speech or the free exercise of religion.

Citizens have the right to Equal Protection under the law and it is the duty of the state to enforce the law without political bias. Any policy of non-violence should apply equitably to all people, faiths, medical providers and to all women-whether they choose birth or abortion.

We also object strongly to the title of the act which seeks to label abortion facilities as "sacred places". The bill seeks to redefine that which is "sacred" and that which is "profane". We seek your amendment to alter the name of the act to accurately reflect its application to facilities that meet the literal definition of "profane" or "profanus" which means "outside of the temple" which would include medical facilities and educational facilities as opposed to the "sacred" which is defined as religious ritual within the temple or place of worship only. By enacting this bill with the current title, the Maryland General Assembly will be equating abortion with child sacrifice as a form of worship. This would be an outrageous affront to all Christians.

### **Maryland Women Deserve Equal Protection and Equal Access**

Without amendment, this bill would protect abortion facilities under Section 19-114 of the Health-General Article, while excluding protections for pro-life medical pregnancy resource centers (PRCs). This would deny the equal protection of our laws for women who choose to give birth to their children.

There are two related bills that seek public grant funds for enhancing abortion clinic security measures, based on a false premise that abortion clinics in Maryland are under increasing threats of violence. Both SB975 and SB947 seek public funds for abortion clinics to improve security infrastructure, etc. **The sponsor of SB975 submitted amendment language redefining "reproductive care facility" to exclude pro-life pregnancy resource centers.** In light of the documented violence against pro-life centers, it would be a major oversight to exclude PRCs from legal protection against acts of violence under this bill.

**Studies have revealed that nearly 3 in 4 women report that they felt pressured or coerced into their abortion decision.** Women who choose to give life to their children deserve **equal protection under the law** so that they may safely access the services of pro-life pregnancy

resource centers despite pressures from sex traffickers, abusive partners, and even predatory practices by the abortion industry that deprives women the legal right to give informed consent.

The **Federal Freedom of Access to Clinical Entrances Act of 1994 (FACE)**, Title 18 U.S. Code, Section 248, protects the rights of women to access abortion clinics OR medical pregnancy resource centers (PRCs). **However, this bill does not conform with the FACE Act** because it would exclude protections for PRCs which operate legally under 42 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) "provider based status", because they would not meet the bill's limited definition of "medical facility" under Sections 10-101 and 19-114 of the Health-General Article.

Maryland has many medical pregnancy resource centers that provide medical services to women under the supervision of licensed physicians consistent with 42 CFR. These centers provide many more services than abortion clinics to women at little to no cost, but they do not commit abortions. Medical PRCs provide STI testing, pregnancy tests, sonograms and other services including providing free baby formula and diapers to those most in need. These centers are important resources for women who need local support to ensure reproductive health and healthy pregnancies.

### **Christians Under Attack for Practicing Faith**

In 2022, [FBI Director Christopher Wray testified](#) before the Congressional House Judiciary Committee that roughly 70% of the cases of violence the FBI were investigating were cases of pro-abortion assailants against pro-life victims. While the bill also seeks to protect people within places of worship, without your amendment to specify that the bill prohibits acts of PHYSICAL violence and does not include speech as violence, it could be weaponized to prosecute people who practice their faith by praying and peacefully protesting outside of abortion facilities or to harass those who volunteer or work at Pregnancy Resource Centers.

The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States imposes a limitation on government and protects the rights of citizens to exercise their religion. **Citizens carry this right with their person** - making even a sidewalk across the street from an abortion facility - a potential place for prayer worship. But Catholics like Mark Crosby, who was brutally beaten outside the Planned Parenthood in Baltimore City, have been denied the right to pray the rosary on a public sidewalk free from violence and suffered permanent injury at the hands of a pro-abortion extremist (see attached photographic evidence).

**In Maryland, there have been 6 documented reports of physical assaults against pro-life citizens who were praying outside of abortion clinics in the past two years.** No arrests have been made despite photographic evidence of the assailants. (Please see attached list of recent incidents of violence against pro-life citizens and providers in Maryland.)

**In Maryland, there have been at least 5 documented cases of vandalism against pro-life pregnancy resource centers in the past two years.** At least 100 pregnancy resource centers and pro-life groups nationwide have been attacked and vandalized since the *Dobb's* leak in early

May 2022. Pro-abortion domestic terrorists have claimed responsibility, and delivered on their promise of a “[summer of rage](#)”. These violent crimes against people practicing the tenets of their faith should be properly classified as **hate crimes** and prosecuted accordingly.

Nationally, perpetrators have attacked 32 Catholic churches since the 2022 leak of the Supreme Court *Dobbs* decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*, including 17 churches where the criminals demonstrated their pro-abortion motive through graffiti or by damaging pro-life memorials or symbols. (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Backgrounder: Attacks on Catholic Churches in the U.S., <https://www.usccb.org/committees/religious-liberty/Backgrounder-Attacks-on-Catholic-Churches-in-US>, accessed on August 30, 2022.)

In December 2023, members of Congress have challenged Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Kristen Clarke over her department’s allegedly discriminatory practices during a House Judiciary Committee hearing. Congressman Chip Roy, R-TX, a former U.S. attorney, questioned Clarke’s and the rest of the Biden administration’s interpretation of the controversial **Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act**. **He noted that this law “protects abortion clinics, pregnancy resource centers, and houses of worship alike.”** He continued, “However, the division of prosecution under the FACE Act shows a significant bias toward prosecuting FACE Act violations involving abortion clinics.” In making this point, Roy specifically referenced the case of pro-life activist [Mark Houck](#), who successfully sued the Biden Department of Justice. (<https://catholicvote.org/house-judiciary-committee-confronts-biden-appointee-over-face-act/>)

### **Maryland is Failing Pregnant Women**

Paradoxically, the state ranks among the worst in the nation for infant mortality, preterm birth rates, and has seen a rise in severe maternal morbidity since 2019. Women in underserved communities lack access to high-risk obstetric care, face challenges in obtaining mental and behavioral health services, experience increased rates of substance abuse and overdose, and are deprived of essential perinatal education for healthy pregnancies.

The Maryland Department of Health has consistently failed to meet the needs of pregnant women and families in Maryland and appropriations should be withheld until the Department provides the annual report to the Centers for Disease Control to measure the number of abortions committed each year in Maryland, abortion reasons, funding sources and related health complications or injuries.

- The Department has routinely failed to enforce existing state health and safety regulations of abortion clinics, even after two women were near fatally injured in botched abortions.
- The Department has routinely failed to provide women with information and access to abortion alternatives, including the Maryland Safe Haven Program (see Department of Human Services), affordable adoption programs or referral to quality prenatal care and family planning services that do not promote abortion.
- The Department has demonstrated systemic bias in favor of abortion providers,

engaging in active partnerships with Planned Parenthood and other abortion organizations to develop and implement public programs, curriculum and training. In doing so the Department is failing to provide medically accurate information on pregnancy and abortion.

- The Department systemically discriminates against any reproductive health and educational providers who are unwilling to promote abortion and in doing so, suppresses pro-life speech and action in community-based programs and public education.
- The Department fails to collect, aggregate and report data about abortion and the correlation between abortion and maternal mortality, maternal injury, subsequent pre-term birth, miscarriage and infertility.
- The Department is failing to protect the Constitutionally-guaranteed rights of freedom of conscience and religion for health care workers, contributing to the scarcity of medical professions and personnel in Maryland.
- The Department is failing to protect women and girls from sexual abuse and sex trafficking by waiving reporting requirements for abortionists, waiving mandatory reporter requirements for abortionists, and failing to regulate abortion practices.

### **In Conclusion**

Maryland Right to Life urges the Maryland General Assembly to denounce all acts of physical violence, without regard for personal politics. Any act of the Maryland legislature that fails to take into account the evidence of violence against Christians and pro-life citizens and fails to provide an equitable solution against violence would deny women and pro-life citizens equal protection under the law and infringe upon the right to free exercise of religion.

We ask that you strengthen the language of this bill by providing equitable protections against **physical acts of violence for all medical facilities without qualification**, not just those under section 19-114 of the Health-General article. Finally we ask that you amend the title of the bill and reject any amendments to expressly exclude protections for pro-life medical pregnancy resource centers.

Sincerely,

Laura Bogley, JD  
Executive Director  
Maryland Right to Life

**REPORTED ACTS OF PRO-ABORTION VIOLENCE OR VANDALISM IN MARYLAND SINCE 2022**

MAY 1, 2022

BALTIMORECOUNTY

Alpha Pregnancy Center, a faith-based pregnancy resource center in Reisterstown, Maryland was vandalized including being spray painted with the words "If Abortions aren't safe, then neither are you". Pro-abortion domestic terrorism group Jane's Revenge took credit for the vandalism but no prosecutions have been initiated.

MAY 4, 2022

FREDERICKCOUNTY

Care-Net of Frederick, a faith-based pregnancy resource center was vandalized and spray painted with the words "Go to Planned Parenthood instead." The center was vandalized twice previously. The cost to the center of implementing security measures was \$14,000 all paid by private donations.

MAY 8, 2022

FREDERICK COUNTY

BirthRight of Frederick Pregnancy Resource Center was vandalized with graffiti.

JUNE 2, 2022

MONTGOMERYCOUNTY

Nicholas John Roske made an attempt against the life of Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh. Roske reportedly was upset about the leaked Dobbs decision. He was armed with a Glock 17 pistol, ammunition, a knife, zip ties, pepper spray and duct tape.

MAY 2023

BALTIMORE CITY

Two senior pro-life citizens were brutally beaten while praying and practicing sidewalk advocacy outside of the Planned Parenthood on N. Howard Street. Mark Crosby was beaten and kicked in the face to within an inch of his life and suffered permanent injury. Photographic evidence of the pro-abort assailant was provided to police but no arrest has been made in the case.

JULY 8, 2023

MONTGOMERYCOUNTY

83 year old pro-life citizen, Olga Fairfax, was brutally attacked while praying outside an abortion facility in Silver Spring, Maryland. A young woman repeatedly punched Olga and sprayed her skin and clothes with spray paint. Photographic evidence of the pro-abort assailant was provided to police but no arrest has been made in the case.



Mark Crosby was brutally beaten while praying outside the Baltimore City Planned Parenthood.



Police were provided with video evidence of the abortion terrorist. No arrest has been made.

Police were provided photographic evidence of Olga Fairfax's attacker (with bar review shirt) but no arrest has been made.



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Known assailant in Frederick County assault. License plate blurred but reported to police.