

Written Testimony to the Senate Committee on Judicial Proceedings

Re: **SB 0933/HB 1186** Criminal Law - Causing Ingestion of an Abortion-Inducing Drug - Prohibition (Women's Freedom From Coercion Act)

February 24, 2025

Position: Favorable, support

Dear Senator Carozza and Fellow Committee Members

My name is Dr. Sandy Christiansen and I'm a board-certified obstetrician/gynecologist licensed in the state of Maryland, the medical director of the Care Net Pregnancy Center of Frederick in Maryland, the Director of the Maryland Chapter of the Academy of Medical Ethics, and the National Medical Director for Care Net.ⁱ

Women in the state of Maryland have the freedom to decide the outcome of their pregnancy—to carry or to choose abortion. They are entitled to full informed consent prior to undergoing a procedure/ingesting medication that carries risks and life-long impact. What they should not be subject to is to be unknowing, forced, or coerced abortion. I respectfully request that you exercise your sworn duty and protect the citizens of Maryland from this danger.

When a woman becomes pregnant, this reality impacts many people in her life—the father of the baby, her parents, her work/employer, her support community, and society in general. Any one of these may influence her decision—and present conflicting interests—that don't necessarily align with the pregnant woman's values or desires.^{ii, iii} This is a set up for coercion to take place, and, in fact, coerced abortion is not uncommon.^{iv, v, vi, vii, viii} It is commonplace for women who are victims of sex trafficking.^{ix, x} Women and girls who have suffered incest and become pregnant are usually counseled to abort their babies and experience pressure to do so.^{xi}

Apart from criminal scenarios, one study revealed that over 60% of women experienced one form of pressure, or another to abort their pregnancies.^{xii} They typically are pressured by the father of the baby, parents, employers, or social service workers.^{xiii} Make no mistake: forced abortion is very real and can be life-threatening for women, who are subject to physical and psychological harm and death threats.^{xiv} Adding to their vulnerability, an average of 50% of women admit to feelings of ambivalence about an abortion decision—making them more at risk for coercion.^{xv}

Abortive drugs are readily available on the Internet from illicit overseas websites. These websites do not provide FDA approved products which may be fake, expired, contaminated, or tainted. These drugs may be purchased by anyone: women, men and children. This reality makes it too easy for abusers and traffickers to obtain abortive drugs and give it to women, without their knowledge. This is criminal activity and Maryland needs this bill to become law to protect our citizens. Women in Maryland are counting on your protection.

I'm asking for a favorable vote on SB 0933 and HB 1186.

Sincerely,

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- ⁱ [Care Net](#) offers compassion, hope, and help to anyone considering abortion by presenting them with realistic alternatives and Christ-centered support through our life-affirming network of pregnancy centers, churches, organizations, and individuals.
- ⁱⁱ Reardon DC. The abortion and mental health controversy: A comprehensive literature review of common ground agreements, disagreements, actionable recommendations, and research opportunities. SAGE Open Med [Internet]. 2018;6:205031211880762. Available from: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/2050312118807624>
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