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BILL NO:	Senate Bill 0933
TITLE:	Criminal Law - Causing Ingestion of an Abortion-Inducing Drug - Prohibition (Women's Freedom From Coercion Act)
COMMITTEE:	Judicial Proceedings
HEARING DATE:	February 26, 2025
POSITION:	<b>OPPOSE</b>

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The Women's Law Center of Maryland is dedicated to ensuring the physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy of women throughout the state. With this mandate, we urge an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 0933.

Senate Bill 0933 would criminalize the act of knowingly and willfully causing a pregnant individual to ingest an abortion-inducing drug without consent, through fraud or coercion, or by force or threat of force. The Women's Law Center does not support coercion or force of any kind, however, we fear SB 0933's potential negative implications and do not want to set a precedent of a separate penalty for a crime utilizing an abortion drug.

SB 933 would inadvertently limit access to medical abortion services. The bill's broad language may increase healthcare providers' hesitancy in prescribing abortion-inducing medications even when it is medically appropriate and consensual. This will reduce the availability of constitutionally-protected abortion services, disproportionately affecting women who rely on medication-induced abortions as a safe and accessible option.

The bill's emphasis on criminalization may also deter women from seeking medical assistance in cases of complications arising from self-managed abortions or miscarriage. Fear of legal consequences could discourage individuals from disclosing pertinent information to healthcare providers, potentially leading to inadequate medical care and increased health risks. Punitive approaches always disproportionately impact marginalized women, and this bill will certainly harm those with limited access to healthcare resources.

Furthermore, SB 933's focus on criminal penalties, including imprisonment of up to 25 years, may not effectively address the root causes of coerced abortions. Advocates argue that resources would be better allocated toward comprehensive support services for pregnant individuals, such as counseling, financial assistance, and access to healthcare. By prioritizing criminalization over support, the bill may fail to empower women to make autonomous decisions about their reproductive health.

For the above stated reasons, the Women's Law Center of Maryland urges an unfavorable report on SB 933.

*The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a non-profit legal services organization whose mission is to ensure the physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy of women in Maryland. Our mission is advanced through direct legal services, information and referral hotlines, and statewide advocacy.*