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BILL NO: House Bill 53  
TITLE: Public Health – Contraceptive Devices - Minors  
COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations  
HEARING DATE: March 13, 2020  
POSITION: **OPPOSE**

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House Bill 53 would prevent young women under the age of 18 from receiving implanted contraceptive devices without parental consent. The Women’s Law Center of Maryland opposes this bill as it would remove privacy and bodily autonomy from young women who are guaranteed those rights under current Maryland law, and do so without any medical purpose.

Maryland law currently allows minors to receive pregnancy testing, birth control, exams, and testing and treatment of STIs without parental knowledge or consent. HB 53 is an attack on these rights designed to create a slippery slope into requiring parental consent for abortions for minors in all circumstances, which is not the existing law.

The right to privacy in reproductive health is crucial. An individual’s right to contraception, the right to a safe abortion, and the right to sexual health information are critical in maintaining bodily autonomy for women. According to the Guttmacher Institute, professional organizations familiar with the scientific evidence uniformly support the provision of reproductive health care to minors on a confidential basis.<sup>1</sup> The debate over whether minors should be allowed to obtain reproductive health services confidentially began in the 1970s, though there are no studies to show that sexual activity in teenagers increased during that time. Minors who are required to inform parents of health services are less likely obtain contraception, and studies have shown that teenagers who gave birth had worse maternal and child health outcomes than those who postponed childbearing. Access to contraception leads to positive health, social and economic outcomes for women, families and society, and should not be impeded. In addition, there is no research to show that preventing access to contraception increases abstinence or creates healthier generations.

For these reasons, the Women’s Law Center of Maryland urges an unfavorable report on House Bill 53.

***The Women’s Law Center of Maryland is a private, non-profit, membership 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. The Women’s Law Center operates hotlines, Protection Order Advocacy and Representation Projects in Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Carroll County, and the Multi-Ethnic Domestic Violence Project.***

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.guttmacher.org/gpr/2005/11/teenagers-access-confidential-reproductive-health-services> (last accessed Feb. 25, 2020).



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