
BILL NO: House Bill 793
TITLE: Public Health – Unborn Child Protection From Dismemberment Abortion Act
COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations
HEARING DATE: March 13, 2020
POSITION: **OPPOSE**

House Bill 793 would outlaw the safest method of performing abortions on women who are 14 weeks or more pregnant. The Women's Law Center of Maryland, Inc. opposes House Bill 793 because it creates undue risks on woman's health and invades very personal decisions that women have a constitutional right to make. Doctors, who are always in the best position to determine the appropriate medical course of action, should be free to make medical decisions without fear of litigation from disgruntled spouses or parents of the pregnant woman.

House Bill 793 is model Right to Life legislation also being offered, unsuccessfully, in other states. It is a bald attempt to restrict abortion without any medical or scientific basis. There is no evidence presented that the method it seeks to prohibit is unsafe. Most importantly, the medical profession should be making these decisions, not the legislature. The additional affront of this bill are the provisions offering a right to sue to a wide range of people. The idea that women's parents would have a right to sue if they do not agree with the woman's decision to terminate a pregnancy takes us back to the dark ages, when women and children were considered mere chattel, not allowed to make personal decisions about themselves. The idea that men could sue a doctor for performing a medical procedure is more of the same. Decisions about pregnancy are and should remain a matter between a woman and her doctor. Any attempt to restrict or interfere with that relationship relegates the woman to the concept of being nothing more than a "host" for the fetus.

The Guttmacher Institute has information regarding other states' attempt to pass this law.¹ This legislation, or ones substantially similar, have largely been unsuccessful, having been found to be an unconstitutional burden on a women's right to choose. Maryland has supported a woman's right to choose at least since Question Six in 1992, and there is no support that the citizens of this state want this type of change in our public policy.

For these reasons, the Women's Law Center urges an unfavorable report on House Bill 793.

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 three hotlines, Protection Order Advocacy and Representation Projects in Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Carroll County, and the Multi-Ethnic Domestic Violence Project.

¹ <https://www.guttmacher.org/state-policy/explore/bans-specific-abortion-methods-used-after-first-trimester>, last viewed March 3, 2017.