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**Bill SB664**  
**Stephen Wallace, Executive Director**  
**Gabriel Network**  
**Position - Opposed**



Gabriel Network opposes SB 664 because every woman and every child deserve better than abortion. Gabriel Network is part of a vibrant and growing pro-woman, pro-child movement that serves thousands each year in Maryland. This movement builds up our communities by valuing each woman, child, and family. We freely offer the support they need to welcome every child with joy and growing strength. Churches, pregnancy help centers, maternity homes, and many other groups and organizations work together in good will to offer women a better choice. While many of the women we work with face great challenges, we have been amazed over and over again by what they can overcome when they are loved, valued, encouraged, and supported. This movement is ready and willing to serve.

*Empowering Women to Choose Life*



Over the past 25 years, Gabriel Network has worked with over 100 local churches to provide free housing, transportation, friendship, and loving support to 18,000 women and children in Maryland and Washington, D.C. These churches and their volunteers serve out of their deep faith commitments and love for their neighbors. Our maternity homes, which have been home to hundreds of women and children, offer free supportive housing before and after childbirth, including case management, life goal

support, scholarships, food assistance, and life skills classes. Right now, volunteer teams at 38 local churches provide direct services to more than 80 families each month. These churches serve their neighbors regardless of creed, race, or nationality, providing baby showers, pregnancy support, and transportation to work or doctor's appointments as a few examples. Their support can last for months or years at a time, sometimes leading to life-long friendships.

A recent example shows how this movement is able and willing to surround a woman and child with love. Maria\* (*name changed to maintain confidentiality*) called us when she was a few months pregnant. She was homeless, moving from bus to bus to sleep. She was under pressure from her situation and people in her life to abort her child. She visited one of our movement partners, and that partner introduced her to us. Maria was amazed by the resources that were available to help her. She was so relieved when we told her that we had a warm, safe place where she and her child could come and live. It was like a great weight was lifted off her shoulders. Maria came to live in one of our maternity



homes and has thrived. With the help of our staff she found a good job, but she needed a car to get back and forth to work and to doctor's appointments. One of our partnering churches put the word out, and a member of the church donated a car to her. Because of that gift, Maria and her son have saved enough to transition to their own apartment. She is so grateful for the gift of her son and for the support she found.

In several states, including Alaska, California, Florida, and Montana, privacy amendments similar to SB 644 which were intended to protect individuals' data privacy have been construed by state courts to establish a state constitutional right to abortion. Maryland has a legitimate interest in protecting the data privacy of its citizens in an age of expanding technological innovation and challenges. That laudable goal can and should be accomplished without negative side effects. Legislation limited specifically to data privacy issues that does not evoke the vague and expansive "fundamental" privacy language found in the United States Supreme Court's abortion opinions would more aptly accomplish the bill's worthy purposes and avoid the deadly and damaging effects of establishing a state constitutional right to abortion.

Gabriel Network, therefore, opposes SB 664, which would likely establish a state constitutional right to abortion. Abortion destroys innocent human lives and leaves mothers, fathers, grandparents, brothers and sisters, and whole communities of relationships with scars that take years or decades to heal. Women and children deserve better. Gabriel Network and its partners in the life-affirming movement stand ready and able to give women the support they need to welcome their children with joy. Maryland should spend its efforts treasuring, protecting, and supporting every human life.