



Secular Maryland

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March 19, 2021

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass
Health and Government Operations Committee
House Office Building, room 241
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: OPPOSE HB1109 Health - Abortion - Ultrasound and Waiting Period

Chairwoman and Members of the Committee:

Laws requiring that an abortion patient be offered the opportunity to view the ultrasound results could be consistent with both the medical evidence on ultrasound viewing in abortion care and ethical medical practice, but laws such as this that also mandate a 24 hour period are not. Waiting periods are medically unnecessary. They introduce an unnecessary hurdle to obtaining medical care and intrude on the patient-provider relationship, while failing to protect the best interests of the patient. These types of provisions mean that women must make two trips to a health care provider in order to obtain an abortion. Making two trips can pose a burden for women who need to arrange for time off from work or caretaking duties. The need to gather funds or make travel arrangements may lead women to have later abortions, which are more expensive and can pose a higher risk. Absent a substantial public health justification, government should not interfere with individual patient-physician encounters.

Also, the use of the phrase "fetal heartbeat" in this bill is misleading and exhibits a bias. A flutter that is detectable by sophisticated ultrasound technology after six weeks occurs because the group of cells that will become the future "pacemaker" of the heart gained the capacity to fire electrical signals. The muscle continues to develop over the next four to six weeks, undergoing the folding and bending that needs to happen for the heart to take its final shape.