

## Testimony in Opposition to HB 1171 (Declaration of Rights – Right to Reproductive Liberty)

Hello, my name is Geoff Suiter, and I have been a Maryland resident since 2015 (Washington County), and I am a retired National Park Service ranger, father of two kids, and a fairly observant Catholic.

One thing which has struck me about the proposed “Right to Reproductive Liberty” bill is that I sincerely think I would oppose it, even were I an atheist, agnostic, or any other religious affiliation. Indeed, my late mother, who was an agnostic most of her life, increasingly came to a pro-life viewpoint as she got older. This is not a matter of religious zealots seeking to impose their views on others.

To the contrary, making abortion, transgender procedures, and the like not only legal, but actually part of the state constitution, is a gratuitous slap in the face to millions of Marylanders, of all races and backgrounds, who believe that life begins at conception, and that sexuality is a fact of biology, not merely of opinion or feelings.

To those who believe this, calling anything a “right to liberty” which would enable some Marylanders (or those merely entering the state temporarily) to completely erase the rights of other Marylanders, the most innocent and with the least power in the matter (i.e. those in the womb) is ridiculous. Many people today – quite rightly – look back with sadness and shame on Maryland’s past in which slavery and segregation ruined the lives of generations. Abortion and the wrongs it promotes disproportionately affect the poor, those who feel they have no choice in how they live their lives, and indeed many of the descendants of those enslaved in Maryland.

To list some specific objections:

- It is very disturbing that there is **no mention of age restrictions**, or the need for parental consent or even input. It is flat out ridiculous that there are restrictions on the age one can buy cigarettes or drive a car, but killing one’s own child or inflicting permanent physical and psychological damage to one’s body is OK, indeed a constitutionally protected “right.”
- Maryland, on the whole, is a left-of-center, “progressive” state, in which the Democratic party has a very comfortable state-wide majority, and will for the foreseeable future. Barring changes on the federal level, **access to abortion is not in danger here**. There is no need to engage in virtue signaling about so-called pro-choice issues, when there are many Marylanders who find this deeply offensive.
- I suspect that even many of those who support access to abortion and surgical and pharmaceutical alteration of natural sex **would not want Maryland to become known as a destination for “abortion tourism.”** Maryland is a small state, and virtually the entire state is within an hour’s drive for residents of other states, including West Virginia, Ohio, and Virginia
- I am generally not too moved by complaints about how “my taxpayer’s money is being spent,” (there are many things I disapprove of which my federal income tax pays for!) but Maryland really **should not foot the bill for out-of-state residents** who have made unfortunate life choices.

Thank you, Maryland legislators and their assistants, who have read this testimony. While I speak only for myself, and to some extent my family, I believe that many others would agree with me. I believe that my statement might strike a chord more than simply cutting and pasting a pre-written text.

Sincerely, and with my prayers and best wishes,

-Geoff Suiter

Clear Spring, Maryland

