

SB890 Abortion Care Access Act

- Increasing availability of abortion care providers
- Link: <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2022RS/bills/sb/sb0890F.pdf>

My name is Lynn McCann and I am testifying on behalf of the Baltimore Abortion Fund (BAF), a community-centered nonprofit that provides financial and logistical support to anyone living in or traveling to Maryland for abortion care. BAF operates a confidential helpline where our case managers provide information and make financial commitments to help clients pay for their procedures.

The Baltimore Abortion Fund is in strong support of the Abortion Care Access Act.

Ensuring there are enough abortion care providers

The majority of Maryland's abortion clinics and providers are concentrated in metro Baltimore and Washington D.C. People living in rural areas – especially the Eastern Shore and Western Maryland – are often forced to travel long distances to access abortion care. These logistical barriers are a serious equity issue that most profoundly affects people of color and those working to make ends meet.

We expect that existing abortion care resources in Maryland will be increasingly strained if Roe v. Wade is weakened and nearby states enact planned abortion restrictions. The number of people forced to travel to Maryland for abortion care is already growing – from about 40% of our clients in 2020 to nearly 50% in 2022. Our organization is bracing itself for an influx of requests for support from out-of-state clients if Roe v. Wade is overturned.

It is vital that our state has enough providers to meet the growing demand for this essential form of health care, which is why we strongly support establishing the Abortion Clinical Care Training Program proposed in this legislation. Investing in abortion care training and allowing qualified health care professionals, such as midwives and nurse practitioners, to provide abortions is a crucial step to protect and expand the accessibility of abortion care in Maryland.

Abortions are time-sensitive health care that cannot be delayed. The Abortion Care Access Act will ensure that Maryland has the health care workforce to continue to provide vital abortion care to its residents.

Making sure insurance works and Medicaid coverage is equitable

Many of the people calling our helpline actually have health insurance – often through Maryland Medicaid or private carriers – but still face difficulties accessing abortion care.

Maryland Medicaid is intended to provide support for abortion procedures, but gaps in coverage currently prevent many people from actually accessing this benefit. On average, 5-10% of the clients who call our helpline are Maryland Medicaid enrollees – to whom we've provided nearly \$36,000 in financial assistance over the last three years. Since we only speak to people who call our helpline, these figures represent only a small portion of Maryland Medicaid enrollees who are unable to use their insurance to pay for an abortion. It is unjust that people with private insurance can more easily afford an abortion, while this vital healthcare remains out of people for people on Medicaid.

Passing the Access to Abortion Care and Health Insurance Act would not only expand abortion access for Maryland Medicaid enrollees, but would also increase our organization's available funding and support for uninsured Marylanders, Marylanders with federal insurance – like military Tricare – that prohibits abortion coverage, and people forced to travel to Maryland for abortion care by anti-choice laws and restrictions.

Abortions are essential health care and should be fully covered by all health insurers, including Maryland Medicaid. The Access to Abortion Care and Health Insurance Act would expand abortion coverage through Maryland Medicaid and remove unjust and unnecessary barriers to care that currently harm people seeking abortions – especially people of color and those working to make ends meet.