



TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

HB1171: Declaration of Rights- Right to Reproductive Liberty

POSITION: Support

BY: Nancy Soreng, LWVMD President

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The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) supports House Bill 1171: Declaration of Rights- Right to Reproductive Liberty. The bill proposes an amendment to the Maryland State Constitution that would affirm the fundamental right to reproductive health care, including abortion. A ballot question on the proposed amendment would be placed before Maryland voters during the next general election, November 2022.

The League of Women Voters has a long history of affirming the constitutional right of reproductive choice. The League's 1983 *Position on Public Policy on Reproductive Rights* states that **"Public policy in a pluralistic society must affirm the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices."**

That same year the League pressed for defeat of a proposed constitutional amendment that would have overturned *Roe v. Wade*, the landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision which declared that the right of privacy includes the right of a woman, in consultation with her doctor, to decide to terminate a pregnancy.

In 1991 and 1992, in coalition with 178 other groups, the League filed an amicus brief in *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey*, arguing that **constitutional rights, once recognized, should not be snatched away.**

During the 1993-1994 health care debate, the League pressed for inclusion of reproductive services, including abortion, in any health care reform package. In 2012 the League successfully fought against attempts in Congress to allow an employer or provider with a "religious or moral" objection to exclude certain health care services, including reproductive health care, from coverage under the ACA.

The League continues to advocate to protect a woman's right to make reproductive choices.

The **Declaration of Rights-Right to Reproductive Liberty** Constitutional amendment, if approved by voters in November 2022, would add abortion rights to Maryland state law, thus protecting and affirming the fundamental right to reproductive liberty, regardless of future U.S. Supreme Court decisions.

The League urges the committee to give a favorable report to House Bill 1171.