



Maryland Section

TO: The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
Members, House Health and Government Operations Committee
The Honorable Nicole A. Williams

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
Danna L. Kauffman

DATE: March 11, 2022

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 626 – *Pregnant Person’s Freedom Act of 2022*

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Maryland Section (MDACOG), which represents the Maryland physicians who serve the obstetrical and gynecological needs of Maryland women and their families, **supports** House Bill 626.

House Bill 626 seeks to clarify that Maryland law does not authorize the prosecution of a pregnant person or anyone assisting a pregnant person for acts and outcomes that would not be considered criminal if they were not pregnant, including termination of a pregnancy, miscarriage, including perinatal death related to failure to seek care or stillbirth. Confidentiality and trust are at the core of the patient-practitioner relationship. Policies and practices that criminalize individuals during pregnancy and the postpartum period create fear of punishment that compromises this relationship and prevents many pregnant people from seeking vital health services.

Criminalization makes people less safe and creates uncertainty as to whether law enforcement will become involved. In the worst circumstances, this leads people to be treated as suspects instead of patients, subject to bedside interrogations and legal scrutiny. Instead of criminalization, harm reduction strategies should be implemented in order to reduce negative consequences and to support agency and autonomy in the decision making of pregnant and parenting people.

Passage of House Bill 626 will ensure that Maryland’s legal system does not create unnecessary harm, increase barriers to accessing care, or increase negative outcomes for pregnant individuals. MDACOG strongly urges a favorable report.

For more information call:

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