
BILL NO: House Bill 1369
TITLE: Public Health- Abortions – Standards and Reporting
COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations
HEARING DATE: March 11, 2022
POSITION: **OPPOSE**

The Women's Law Center of Maryland opposes HB 1369, which would alter the law around viability of a fetus, and would create onerous reporting requirements for doctors who provide abortion care. It would allow the State to interfere with a woman's protected decision to terminate a pregnancy. This bill violates Fourteenth Amendment due process rights and is an unconstitutional attack on the well-established right for a woman to make her own decision whether to continue or terminate a pregnancy, even in the difficult circumstances of a later term abortion. Most of these pregnancies are wanted pregnancies.

Every pregnancy is different, and each individual's circumstances and needs are unique. The decision whether to continue or terminate a pregnancy is an inherently private and personal one, to be made by a woman herself with the advice of a health care professional she trusts, not the government. Restrictions that prevent women from getting the care they need jeopardize their health and well-being, and intrude into the patient-physician relationship.

Instead of blocking access to the full range of essential reproductive health care, the General Assembly must advance measures that respect women's dignity, and their right to make these personal decisions based on their own circumstances. Maryland must ensure that women have the information and resources they need to make decisions that are best for themselves and their families, which includes the ability to end a pregnancy, even if it is later in the pregnancy. Requiring, at 24 weeks pregnancy (essentially defining all pregnancies to be viable at that set moment), that many hoops be jumped through prior to providing abortion care, interferes with the patient-physician relationship and the doctor's medical advice and expertise. These later term abortions most often involve wanted pregnancies, and putting the women through these requirements is cruel and unnecessary. Requiring the signoff of a second doctor may cause delay that could compromise the women's health.

In addition, HB 1369 would create a reporting requirement for any doctor who performs any abortion, regardless of the weeks of gestation. This is a thinly veiled attempt to place doctors in a potentially dangerous position. Despite removing the name of the patient, it is clear that the doctors have been targeted, even murdered, when it is known they provide this kind of care. That is untenable.

Therefore, we oppose HB 1369 and urge an unfavorable report.

The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a private, non-profit, membership organization that serves as a leading voice for justice and fairness for women. It advocates for the rights of

women through legal assistance to individuals and strategic initiatives to achieve systemic change.