

Chair Melony Griffith
Senate Finance Committee
Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 21401

SUPPORT – SB 798
Declaration of Rights - Right to Reproductive Freedom

Dear Honorable Chair Griffith:

My name is Rosalyn Levy Jonas, and I have been a Maryland resident for nearly 40 years. In 1966, 17 years before I would take up residency in Maryland, I had a difficult and challenging experience here.

I was just 20 years old, single, pregnant, and desperate, I stood alone on Eutaw Street in downtown Baltimore, waiting to be picked up by a man I'd never met, whose job it was to deliver me to the place where I was scheduled to have an illegal abortion.

My abortion was performed in a farmhouse somewhere in rural Baltimore County, by a man whose face I never saw. For his services, I paid him \$600 in cash, and after a few hours, I was returned to Eutaw Street. I consider myself lucky; no complications prevented me from later choosing to bring children into the world. I have two adult daughters whose reproductive rights I am determined to protect. On their behalf and on behalf of the women in this state and across the country, I have served on the boards of state and national organizations tasked with preserving their rights.

I had my abortion seven years before *Roe v. Wade* gave women the right to control their own reproductive destinies. Seven years before women, desperate to control their bodies and their lives, could stop using coat hangers and knitting needles and stop drinking poison—and stop standing alone on Eutaw Street, hoping to meet a man who was actually a doctor. Seven years before girls and women could stop their search for the underground networks that existed to connect them with abortion providers. And seven years before desperate women had to come up with the cash equivalent of \$5,200 today.

Today, we are faced with the reality that *Roe v. Wade* has been overturned. Twelve states, including our neighbor, West Virginia, have total abortion bans. No one should have to endure the fear, uncertainty, and financial hardship that I did in 1966. But that is the reality for too many, right now. Maryland must take the first step toward asserting reproductive freedom as a fundamental constitutional right. I urge a favorable report on SB 798.

Sincerely,
Rosalyn Levy Jonas
Bethesda, MD 20814