



www.marylandwomen.org

Maryland Commission for Women

A Commission of the Maryland Department of Human Services

51 Monroe Street, Ste. 1034 – Rockville, Maryland 20850

www.marylandwomen.org

February 24, 2023

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Senate Finance Committee

Miller Senate Office Building – 3 East

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: SB 0798 – Declarations of Rights - Right to Reproductive Freedom

Dear Senator Griffith, Senator Klausmeier, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee:

SB0798 Declaration of Rights - Right to Reproductive Freedom proposes an amendment to the state's constitution which will establish that every person has the fundamental right to reproductive freedom and will prohibit the State from, directly or indirectly, denying, burdening, or abridging the right unless justified by a compelling State interest achieved by the least restrictive means.

Should this bill pass, it would be subject to vote by registered Maryland voters in the November 2024 general election.

The Maryland Commission for Women urges you to support this legislation and the right of women to make decisions regarding their reproductive health.

As you know, the Maryland Commission for Women was established in 1965 and was set in state law in 1971. An office of the Department of Human Services, the Commission is a 25-member advisory board whose duties outlined in its enabling legislation include: study the status of women in our state, recommend methods of overcoming discrimination, recognize women's accomplishments and contributions, and provide informed advice to the executive and legislative branches of government on the issues concerning the women of our state. It is to fulfill this mandate that the Commission writes to you today.

In June 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* and 50 years of legal precedent that leaves abortion policy to the will of individual states.

Maryland Commission for Women
Re: SB 0798 – Declaration of Rights
Page 2

While Maryland has laws in place regarding abortions, with no federal protections in place, the right for women to make independent reproductive health decisions could be at risk without this constitutional amendment.

We believe the health care decisions someone makes about their own body should be between a person and their doctor. This bill protects all rights regarding reproductive health including infertility treatments and birth control, not just abortion. A constitutional amendment is the strongest protection we could provide to ensure future generations of Marylanders have meaningful access to the full range of reproduction health care.

The Maryland Commission for Women requests your support for this bill and the rights for all Marylanders to make healthcare decisions regarding their own body.

With very best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tawanda Bailey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Tawanda Bailey, Chair
Maryland Commission for Women

Please note that the positions expressed in this letter are those of the Maryland Commission for Women and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Governor or the Department of Human Services.