

To Whom It May Concern:

I write to express my firm opposition to HB703/SB798, the Maryland Abortion Amendment of 2023. I am a resident of Prince George's County; a new, young mother; an Independent who most often votes Democrat; a communications professional working for immigrant rights; and above all, a devout Catholic who believes in the dignity and sanctity of all life from conception to natural death. I am opposed to the amendment for various reasons, including the following:

1) The Amendment is dishonest.

- a) The bill proposes language to appear on the ballot before voters, but in doing so it intentionally omits the key phrase creating a right to abortion.
 - i) The language that would become part of Maryland's Constitution includes a right to "PREVENT, CONTINUE, OR END ONE'S OWN PREGNANCY" (page 2, lines 5-6). Yet the language that would go before voters omits that language (page 2, lines 24-27)!
- b) This kind of dishonesty undermines trust in democracy and government.

2) The Amendment would hurt the women of Maryland.

- a) Abortion is a poor substitute for the true advancement of women.
 - i) Promoting abortion distracts society and policy makers from advancing maternity leave, prenatal care, wrap-around pregnancy support, and other policies that promote and empower women.
 - ii) How can women truly be liberated if they are passing their oppression onto their children via abortion?
 - iii) Abortion hurts women. Women deserve better.

3) The Amendment violates the principle of nonviolence.

- a) No one has a right to do violence to another person!
- b) Abortion is not only violence, but terminal violence.
- c) Allowing violence against any members of society undermines democracy.

4) Maryland courts could use the Amendment to mandate taxpayer funding for abortion.

- a) In other state constitutions a right to privacy has been interpreted by state courts to mandate taxpayer funding for abortion.

5) Maryland courts could use the Amendment to strike down our parental notification law.

- a) In 1999, a Montana state District Court in *Wicklund v. State* overturned that state's parental consent law under Montana's constitutional "[right to individual privacy](#)" (which is more general than Maryland's Abortion Amendment).

6) Maryland courts could use the Amendment to strike down other reasonable regulations on abortion (if Maryland enacts them).

7) The Amendment would trap Maryland law in 2023.

- a) Our view of the abortion debate in 2023 is myopic, focused on the passions of this moment. The Amendment could be a part of Maryland's Constitution for decades, even centuries, and trap Maryland in our 2023 frame of mind.
- b) Medical advances continue to push the point of viability, the time when a preborn child could survive outside the womb, earlier in pregnancy.



I have a young son. Carrying him through a difficult pregnancy and giving birth to him through a long and painful labor is the hardest thing I've yet done. I do not oppose abortion lightly; I can imagine the strain unexpected pregnancy places on women, particularly poor and marginalized women.

I think that all options should be on the table in order to help indigent women facing crisis pregnancies – with the exception of the intentional killing of an innocent life. The government should expend ample resources to make women feel capable of undertaking this most difficult but beautiful and rewarding experience of motherhood.

Women need robust and wraparound support during pregnancy and early motherhood. With very limited exceptions, such as in situations where the life of the mother is at risk, I do not believe abortion is the answer. Abortion is a false solution to the problems facing our society that put

women in the terrible position of feeling the need to harm their own children. Our society fails women in so many ways – it's insistence on abortion as a "solution" is one of its worst failures.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I urge you to oppose this dangerous amendment and instead invest in whole-life solutions that truly meet the needs of Maryland mothers and their families.

Thank you,

Kathleen Kollman Birch
Hyattsville, Maryland