

Christians Advocating for Life in Annapolis 2023

Working to foster God's vision for human flourishing

BILL: Senate Bill 798
TITLE: Declaration of Rights—Right to Reproductive Freedom
COMMITTEE: Finance
DATE: March 1st, 2023 1:00 pm
WHO: Jennifer Brown, Christians Advocating for Life in Annapolis 2023
POSITION: **OPPOSE**

Committee Chair, the Honorable Senator Griffith, and Senate Finance Committee Members,

My name is Jennifer Brown, and I am a mother, political science instructor, holding a Master of Arts in Government from Johns Hopkins, with a concentration in law and justice, and previously a legislative aide here in the House. I join my testimony with Dr. Kristen Holt and written testimony of Christians Advocating for Life, a group of multicultural, nonpartisan Christian ministry leaders, representing over 200 churches and thousands of constituents in this region. I am also a survivor of domestic violence which is why I speak to you today on SB798.

During the course of my marriage, I experienced all kinds of abuse and am no stranger to the injustice and horrors associated with it. No person should experience violence at the hands of another. No one should have their voice eliminated. Yet, that is exactly what SB798 will enshrine in our state Constitution forever. Making abortion a “fundamental right” gives it the same legal status as other fundamental rights like free speech. In application, however, it takes all of the other rights away, as it eliminates the voice and ultimately the life of the “fetus” which is Latin for “baby.”

Creating an amendment that prohibits any and all limitations on abortion puts us all at risk. We have never passed an amendment that would make it a fundamental right to take an innocent life. This amendment will not just silence the voices of millions of babies but will set a dangerous precedent that taking a life can be someone’s personal “right.” The baby is an entirely separate and unique life. Babies have bodies, heartbeats, and can feel. Regardless of the terminology used to dehumanize the unborn, it is the same thing my husband did to me. He believed he had a “right” to abuse me and because he believed he had a right to treat me the way he did, I no longer had any rights at all. At the end of the day, you will not just silence the voices of millions of babies, but you will create a scenario where abortions forced by abusers or sex-traffickers will be allowed without question.

While reviewing last year’s testimony from Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Abuse (MCASA) and Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV), I was stunned that each presumes to speak for all women who have experienced domestic violence. The testimony implied that all victims of domestic violence support a pro-abortion position and see limitations to abortion as a hindrance to escaping abuse.

The testimony also used nationwide figures drawn from over two decades of data, making the number of rape-related pregnancies appear significantly larger than real figures. According to the Maryland Medicaid abortion service figures, cited in Table 1¹, rape related abortions accounted for only **2 abortions**

^{1 1} Medical Care Programs Administration. Maryland Department of Health. FY2023 Operating Budget Analysis. P 46.
<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/pubs/budgetfiscal/2023fy-budget-docs-operating-M00Q01-MDH-Medical-Care-Programs-Administration.pdf>

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in 2021. The Medicaid figures are the only official record of rape-related abortion service claims in the state. Clearly these figures are not the impetus nor the justification for a constitutional amendment.

In addition, I would cite the primary difficulty of escaping an abusive relationship is failure of the law and its application within the legal system itself. Though it espouses help, the system does very little to provide lasting help that will allow a victim to escape an abuser permanently. Only the members of this body have the power to change these legal deficiencies. Instead, victims are offered abortion as a preeminent option, an option which will often leave them even more emotionally and perhaps physically scarred.

You have every right to your opinion. As an American you also have the right to have your life protected. Won't you uphold the same right for all citizens of your state? To set the record straight, many abused women believe as I do. Maryland has the 3rd most progressive abortion laws in the country, there is no need for an Amendment to make abortion a constitutional "right" please vote **NO on SB 798**.

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Table 1. Maryland Medicaid abortion services by reason during 2021. Note this is a subset of the total number of abortions in Maryland which is unknown as it is not reported to the CDC.

<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/pubs/budgetfiscal/2023fy-budget-docs-operating-M00Q01-MDH-Medical-Care-Programs-Administration.pdf> pg 46.

Exhibit 17 indicates the reasons abortions were performed in fiscal 2021 according to the restrictions in the federal budget and State budget bill.

Exhibit 17 Abortion Services by Reason Fiscal 2021

I. Abortion Services Eligible for Federal Financial Participation (Based on restrictions contained in the federal budget.)

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Number</u>
1. Life of the woman endangered.	0
Total Received	0

II. Abortion Services Eligible for State-only Funding (Based on restrictions contained in the fiscal 2021 State budget.)

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Number</u>
1. Likely to result in the death of the woman.	0
2. Substantial risk that continuation of the pregnancy could have a serious and adverse effect on the woman's present or future physical health.	530
3. Medical evidence that continuation of the pregnancy is creating a serious effect on the woman's mental health and, if carried to term, there is a substantial risk of a serious or long-lasting effect on the woman's future mental health.	9,611
4. Within a reasonable degree of medical certainty that the fetus is affected by genetic defect or serious deformity or abnormality.	20
5. Victim of rape, sexual offense, or incest.	2
Total Fiscal 2021 Claims Received through November 2021	10,163

Source: Maryland Department of Health
