



TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

SB0798: Declaration of Rights- Right to Reproductive Freedom

POSITION: Support

BY: Nancy Soreng, President

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The League of Women Voters Maryland supports **Senate Bill 798: Declaration of Rights- Right to Reproductive Freedom**, which would constitutionally enshrine Marylanders' right to reproductive liberty, including whether to prevent, continue, or end one's own pregnancy.

The League has a long history of affirming the rights of individuals to self-determination related to bodily autonomy, privacy, and reproductive health. The League's 1983 *Position on Public Policy on Reproductive Rights* states that "**Public policy in a pluralistic society must affirm the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices.**" That same year the League pressed for defeat of a proposed constitutional amendment that would have overturned *Roe v Wade*.

In 1991 and 1992, in coalition with 178 other groups, the League filed an amicus brief in *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey*, arguing that **constitutional rights, once recognized, should not be snatched away.** And during the 1993-1994 health care debate, the League pressed for inclusion of reproductive services, including abortion, in any health care reform package. In 2012 the League successfully fought against attempts in Congress to allow an employer or provider with a "religious or moral" objection to exclude certain health care services, including reproductive health care, from coverage under the ACA.

The League continues to advocate to protect each individual's right to make their own reproductive health choices.

Following the Supreme Court's decision last year in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* to overturn *Roe* after nearly fifty years, thereby removing the constitutional right to abortion, many states passed legislation essentially banning abortion under any or most circumstances. **Thus, state courts and constitutions have become even more important in protecting reproductive rights.** Passage of this bill would be a strong step to ensure that reproductive health care, including abortion, will remain accessible and legal in Maryland.

The League and its 1,500+ members urge the committee to give a favorable report to Senate Bill 798.