

**POSITION:** FAVORABLE: SB798: Declaration of Rights – Right to Reproductive Freedom  
**TO:** Senate Finance Committee  
**DATE:** March 1, 2023  
**FROM:** Dr. Robert Spear, Swanton, Garrett County, MD  
Mountain Maryland Alliance for Reproductive Freedom (MMARF)

My name is Bob Spear. I am a resident of Garrett County and grandfather to five amazing young women who are fierce advocates for autonomy over their own bodies and their own reproductive freedoms. To support them and young people in my rural community, I am an active member in MMARF, the Mountain Maryland Alliance for Reproductive Freedom, a non-partisan, grassroots organization of people in Allegany and Garrett Counties committed to assuring and expanding reproductive healthcare to residents in Mountain Maryland.

A large and growing constituency in Western Maryland understands that reproductive healthcare, including education, family planning, contraception, and abortion, must be readily accessible and affordable for all.

We know that misinformation and stigma around reproductive choice hampers us, that lack of access to reproductive healthcare harms young people and families, and that the freedom to make reproductive healthcare decisions can be eliminated entirely, as our neighbors in nearby West Virginia have experienced.

Maryland voters upheld our current abortion law in a referendum in 1992. But because of the Dobbs decision, we need to put abortion rights into our Maryland Constitution. But we must go further and protect all reproductive rights, not only abortion, to safeguard against future adverse Court decisions.

Consider this. The Comstock Act of 1873 banned the distribution of contraceptives and information about birth control. The Supreme Court ended Comstock in **1965** when it ruled in *Griswold v. Connecticut* that the constitutional right to privacy allowed married couples to use birth control. But Justice Clarence Thomas has written that *Griswold* should be reconsidered. Another reason Maryland needs to protect all reproductive rights.

MMARF joins the many other Maryland organizations and citizens who support SB798. We urge this committee to do the same.

Thank you.

