

Re Constitutional Amendment: **Declaration of Rights - Right to Reproductive Freedom**

HB 705/SB 798 vital to citizens of Maryland, particularly in rural areas as Western Maryland, where I live.

As a physician, I have cared for women who have had serious infections from a botched abortion, and poor women who had to travel for hours—when we have no public transportation—to obtain a safe abortion in Baltimore. I am aware of women who were forced to carry and deliver fetuses with fatal abnormalities (e.g., anencephaly, where part of the skull and brain are missing) because local hospitals refused to allow a late-term termination. Barbaric.

Some years ago, I strongly opposed the merger of Sacred Heart and Memorial Hospitals because that would have put all health care under the restrictions of the Catholic church, with no accessible options. This would have prohibited not only abortions, but vital contraceptives, tubal ligations, administration of Depot Provera (a long acting contraceptive), and condoms. (The prohibition on tubals would have forced women to go out of town and have a 2<sup>nd</sup> anesthesia and operation after their delivery). Counseling about HIV and STD prevention would have been prohibited.

Health care decisions should be between a patient and his/her physician, and not dictated by anyone else's personal or religious beliefs.

Many lives—and the future of reproductive health care in MD—are at stake. I urge you to support HB 705/SB 798. Our “representatives” do not represent the views of many in Western Maryland on this critically important issue.

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