



**FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT**  
**OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE**

Jessica Fitzwater  
County Executive

**HB 705 - Declaration of Rights - Right to Reproductive Freedom**

**DATE:** February 21, 2023  
**COMMITTEE:** House Health and Government Operations Committee  
**POSITION:** Favorable  
**FROM:** The Office of Frederick County Executive Jessica Fitzwater

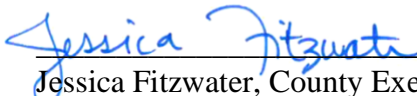
As the County Executive of Frederick County, I urge the committee to give **HB 705 - Declaration of Rights - Right to Reproductive Freedom** a favorable report.

This bill would constitutionally enshrine the rights of Marylanders to reproductive freedom. Specifically, the bill recognizes that a central component of an individual's rights to liberty and equality includes the fundamental right to reproductive liberty. Affirming this right in our State Constitution is imperative considering the recent United States Supreme Court decision *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, which overruled both *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992), giving individual states the full power to regulate any aspect of abortion not protected by federal law.

Since the Dobbs decision, "trigger" laws in 13 states have gone into effect, generally prohibiting abortion at any stage of pregnancy except in specified circumstances.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, states across the country are considering newly introduced legislation to curtail reproductive rights, including our neighboring states Virginia and Pennsylvania. West Virginia has a total ban on abortions, as of September 2022.<sup>2</sup>

Maryland has, thankfully, improved access to reproductive care, including with 2022 legislation that expanded the list of medical professionals who can provide abortion services. As a state, we will continue to see increased demand on these services as our neighboring states restrict access. Frederick County is uniquely located in close proximity and/or bordering the three states of Virginia, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. For this reason, I believe it is particularly important to my constituents that Maryland protects reproductive rights to the greatest extent possible.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 705. I urge you to protect reproductive rights for all Marylanders by advancing this bill with a favorable report.

  
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Jessica Fitzwater, County Executive  
Frederick County, MD

<sup>1</sup>["Abortion Access After the Dobbs Decision"](#), Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, 2023.

<sup>2</sup>["Abortion Access After the Dobbs Decision"](#), Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, 2023.