

**House Health and Government Operations Committee**  
**House Bill 705 - Declaration of Rights - Right to Reproductive Freedom**  
**February 21, 2023**  
**Support**

Planned Parenthood of Maryland strongly supports *House Bill 705 – Declaration of Rights – Right to Reproductive Freedom*. The legislation proposes an amendment to the Maryland Constitution to protect reproductive freedom for all Marylanders. Reproductive freedom encompasses the right to make and effectuate decisions about abortion, birth control, and continuing a pregnancy.

HB 705 is the most important bill to protect reproductive freedom in Maryland in our lifetime. On June 14, 2022, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* with the *Dobbs* decision. This disastrous decision deprives everyone in the United States of constitutional protections for bodily autonomy.

With the *Dobbs* decision, 14 states have already banned abortion with a dozen state bans in the pipelines. Our abortion rights are protected in Maryland – at least for now. In 1991, the Maryland General Assembly had the foresight to repeal outdated unconstitutional abortions restrictions and codify the statutory framework of *Roe v. Wade*. Maryland voters overwhelmingly approved this measure in 1992 in a ballot referendum known as Question 6.

We are deeply appreciative that Speaker Jones has the foresight to propose protecting reproductive freedom in the Maryland Constitution. This measure will protect us now and all future generations of Marylanders. A constitutional amendment offers us the strongest legal protection against infringements on our right to bodily autonomy.

Before the *Dobbs* decision, we may have felt safe in Maryland, but our world has drastically changed. Almost half of the people of reproductive age in our country will lose the right to abortion in the coming year. This change did not happen overnight. The anti-abortion advocates spent decades in their campaign to reverse abortion rights, and they are continuing to advance extreme restrictions at the state level with 300 bills proposed this session, including

a Kentucky bill that would create a homicide penalty for abortion patients and providers. House Bill 705 will provide constitutional protections against any future attempts to restrict reproductive rights in Maryland. We ask for a favorable vote. We need this measure to protect future generations of Maryland and demonstrate that we will not be deterred in our efforts to protect reproductive freedom.

If we can provide any additional information, please contact Robyn Elliott at [relliott@policypartners.net](mailto:relliott@policypartners.net).