

Committee: House Health and Government Operations Committee

Bill Number: House Bill 705 - Declaration of Rights - Right to Reproductive Freedom

Hearing Date: February 21, 2023

Position: Support

Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan Washington, DC (PPMW) is proud to serve Maryland's Prince George's and Montgomery Counties as the oldest and largest provider of sexual and reproductive health care services in the Metropolitan Washington area. PPMW has been providing high quality, comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care for more than 80 years, including abortion, at our health centers in Suitland and Gaithersburg, as well as high quality sexual health education across Prince George's and Montgomery Counties.

PPMW strongly supports House Bill 705 – Declaration of Rights – Right to Reproductive Freedom:

“That every person, as a central component of an individual’s rights to liberty and equality, has the fundamental right to reproductive freedom, including but not limited to the ability to make and effectuate decisions to prevent, continue, or end one’s own pregnancy. The state may not, directly or indirectly, deny, burden, or abridge the right unless justified by a compelling state interest achieved by the least restrictive means.”

The Maryland Legislature must act now as the right to reproductive freedom remains under constant attack by anti-abortion politicians, activists, and organizations. The Supreme Court’s decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization*, left the decision to secure the right to abortion access up to the states. Meanwhile, national-level attacks on abortion access continue, including a current effort by anti-abortion extremists to take mifepristone—one of the drugs used in the most common form of medication abortion in the U.S.—off the market (*Alliance for Hippocratic Medicine v. U.S. Food and Drug Administration*). Maryland must do what it

can to protect access to abortion in line with Maryland's values, which includes a constitutional amendment.

Though the right to abortion has been Maryland law since 1992, and many individuals assume states like Maryland will steadfastly continue to protect the right to abortion now and in the future, a constitutional amendment will provide the strongest protection for the right to reproductive freedom. Right now, abortion access continues to be banned and severely restricted across the country, including Maryland's own neighbor to the west, West Virginia. PPMW continues to see patients from hostile states, coming to us seeking care that is now banned in their home states. HB 705 is a crucial first step to ensure that reproductive rights of current and future generations of Marylanders and those traveling to us for care are protected.

PPMW's mission is to provide high-quality, compassionate health care, including reproductive care; promote sexual health; and advocate for reproductive rights and health equity for all. A constitutional amendment will provide Marylanders the strongest protection for abortion access. PPMW asks for a favorable report on HB 705.