



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

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**Senate Bill 798 – Declaration of Rights – Rights to Reproductive Freedom
Finance Committee – March 1, 2023
SUPPORT**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2023 legislative session. WDC is one of Maryland's largest and most active Democratic clubs with hundreds of politically active members, including many elected officials.

WDC urges the passage of SB0798. By providing for a referendum to amend the Maryland State Constitution, this bill establishes a process that, upon approval of the referendum, will guarantee 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 making and effectuating decisions to prevent, continue, or end one's own pregnancy regardless of any future legislative action. It will prohibit the state from, directly or indirectly, denying, burdening, or abridging the right unless justified by a compelling state interest achieved by the least restrictive means. This bill also specifies that the referendum shall be submitted to the qualified voters of the state at the next general election to be held in November 2024 for adoption or rejection pursuant to Article XIV of the Maryland Constitution.

With the Supreme Court's decision to overturn the federal protections of *Roe v. Wade* and let individual states determine whether a woman can terminate her pregnancy, it is more critical than ever to protect women's reproductive rights in Maryland. While the right to terminate a pregnancy up to the point of viability is codified in Maryland State law, it is not a right under the State's Constitution. Without a Constitutional protection, women's future rights could be at risk, including the right to birth control. Nearly 70 percent of Maryland voters oppose the Supreme Court's ruling to overturn *Roe v. Wade* and nearly 80 percent support a state constitutional amendment that will protect the right to have an abortion in Maryland.¹

A woman's right to reproductive health and freedom is a top priority of WDC. We ask for your support for SB0798 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.

Diana E. Conway
WDC President

Ginger Macomber
WDC Advocacy Committee

¹ Washington Post – University of Maryland Poll (2022, Sept. 22-27). https://docs-cdn-prod.news-engineering.aws.wapo.pub/publish_document/9396badf-7316-49cd-acc9-c92b4cc59edd/published/9396badf-7316-49cd-acc9-c92b4cc59edd.pdf