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Support
HB 705 – Declaration of Rights - Right to Reproductive Freedom
House Health & Government Operations Committee
February 21, 2023

My name is Charlene Rock-Foster, and I support HB 705 – Declaration of Rights - Right to Reproductive Freedom. This bill would allow voters to determine reproductive freedom as a fundamental constitutional right for Marylanders.

In September of 2009, I was informed by my Ob/Gyn that I was pregnant; this after I noticed a month without a menstrual cycle. At the time I was 42 years old, got married in July of that same year, which that union gave me two bonus children—one boy who had graduated from high school and was going away to college, and one girl who was in the 10th grade. My family was complete, with both children embracing me as their second mother.

We were dealing with the heavy financial responsibilities of getting one child through college with another one in high school, preparing to attend college, on top of running a household where at the time the recession impacted me and my husband's income. I told my husband of the news and we had a very long talk about our family planning. In the end, we choose not to have a third child. At the time I was referred to Planned Parenthood which was one of the medical services that was able to do the abortion procedure with me being eight weeks into my pregnancy. Also at time, my medical plan Blue Cross/Blue Shield did cover the costs of the abortion. My husband was with me for the procedure and was very supportive.

Over 10 years later after my abortion my children are grown, living very productive lives. My husband and I are officially empty nesters still in love with each other. I do not regret having to make the decision to have an abortion. In my reproductive years, I was treated for uterine cancer, something that is not often seen in women under 25 years old, and I had a miscarriage at 32 years old. I've by choice used various forms of birth control to manage my reproductive health. I'm sharing all of these things to support not only every woman's decision to choose abortion, but to choose to continue or prevent a pregnancy if they so desire. Establishing that as a constitutional right will lay the groundwork for ensuring that all three outcomes are a reality for all Marylanders. It is my belief that society should not subject women in having to create nor add to a family when she knows she is not in the position to do so physically, mentally, or both.

For the foregoing reasons, I urge a favorable report on HB 705. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.