



BILL NO: Senate Bill 798
TITLE: Declaration of Rights - Right to Reproductive Liberty
COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations
HEARING DATE: March 28, 2023
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) is the state domestic violence coalition that brings together victim service providers, allied professionals, and concerned individuals for the common purpose of reducing intimate partner and family violence and its harmful effects on our citizens. **MNADV urges the House Health and Government Operations Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 798.**

Between 6-22% of women terminate their pregnancies because they're in an abusive relationship.¹ One of the most common reasons why survivors struggle to leave their abuser is because they have children in common. When a survivor is denied an abortion, they remain tethered to their abusive partner, whereas survivors who choose to terminate an unwanted pregnancy have a reduced risk of experiencing violence over time.² Additionally, survivors frequently experience forms of abuse that put them at an increased risk for unintended pregnancy, such as birth control sabotage, sexual assault, and reproductive coercion.³ 2.1 million women in the U.S. have become pregnant as a result of rape by an intimate partner,⁴ and, in one study, 16% of survivors with rape-related pregnancies chose to get an abortion.⁵ Access to abortions can be a matter of life or death for survivors of domestic violence because experiencing abuse while pregnant puts survivors at a much higher risk of being killed by their abuser.⁶

Senate Bill 798 proposes a constitutional amendment that voters must approve that would establish that a central aspect of a person's rights to liberty and equality includes the fundamental right to reproductive liberty including but not limited to the right to decide to prevent, continue, or end a pregnancy. The bill also would prohibit the state from interfering, abridging, denying or burdening a person's right to reproductive liberty absent a compelling State interest achieved by the least restrictive means. This legislation is singularly the most important action we can take to protect the reproductive freedom of the generations behind us.

For the above stated reasons, the **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence urges a favorable report on SB 798.**

¹ <https://ncadv.org/blog/posts/ncadv-denounces-law-restricting-abortion-in-texas>

² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4182793/>

³ <https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/userfiles/file/HealthCare/Reproductive%20Health%20Guidelines.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.guttmacher.org/gpr/2016/07/understanding-intimate-partner-violence-sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-rights-issue>

⁵ <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/211678.pdf>

⁶ https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/70764/WHO_RHR_11.35_eng.pdf?sequence=1

For further information contact Melanie Shapiro • Public Policy Director • 301-852-3930 • mshapiro@mnadv.org