



BILL NO: House Bill 973
TITLE: Health - Abortion - Ultrasound and Waiting Period
COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations
HEARING DATE: March 16, 2023
POSITION: **OPPOSE**

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 an unfavorable report on HB 973.**

HB 973 would prohibit a physician from performing an abortion within 24 hours of a transabdominal ultrasound imaging. If a pregnant person lives more than 100 miles away, they must wait at least two hours after the transabdominal ultrasound imaging. The bill also delineates requirements for the medical professional that may perform the transabdominal ultrasound. Further, there must be a signed written certification by the pregnant person that they were offered the opportunity to view the ultrasound image, receive a printed copy of the ultrasound image, and hear the fetal heartbeat.

The ability to obtain abortion care without delay is critically important to people's reproductive health. Delays create an unnecessary barrier to obtaining medical care and intrude on the patient-provider relationship. Further, unnecessary delays fail to protect the best interests of the patient. For victims of domestic violence, the ability to receive the medical care they desire without any unnecessary delays is crucial. Due to the power and control dynamics of domestic violence a victim may be unable to leave their home a second time to get medical care or worse they could be in danger of more violence from their abuser.

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

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

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



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

For the above stated reasons, the **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence** urges an **unfavorable report on HB 973**.

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

⁴ <https://www.gutmacher.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