



BILL NO: House Bill 812
TITLE: Health - Reproductive Health Services - Protected Information and Insurance Requirements
COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations
HEARING DATE: March 2, 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 HB 812.**

Domestic violence is about power and control, and many abusers choose to weaponize a partner's bodily autonomy and reproductive choices as tools of violence. Reproductive justice is an essential component of gender equality and for victims of domestic violence abortion access is essential for their safety. The devastating Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* eviscerated the right to bodily autonomy and the right to have an abortion. Access to abortions can be a matter of life or death for victims of domestic violence and pregnant victims are at a higher risk of being killed by their abuser. Victims 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.

In the wake of the Supreme Court's ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Whole Women's Health*, 14 states have already fully or nearly banned abortion, and another ten are expected to do so. Over 300 abortion-related bills have already been filed this year across the country, the majority of which are anti-abortion and include significant criminal penalties for providers of abortion care. The campaign to intimidate providers and patients in Maryland depends upon having access to information about reproductive health care provided in our state. Under electronic health record systems, protected health information – including reproductive health records - flows easily between states. Information sharing is allowed by law if it is related to coordination of care among a patient's providers. Under most circumstances, care coordination improves the health outcomes of patients. But in the case of reproductive health, information sharing is putting reproductive health providers and patients at great risk.

This legislation provides extra layers of protection for reproductive health information in electronic health record systems, often called health information exchanges. The legislation also ensures Maryland's state government protects personal information of patients and providers that may be stored in state databases. Reproductive freedom in Maryland depends on making sure we do not expose the personal information of providers *or* patients.

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Passage of House Bill 812 will ensure that the forced birth ideology of other state governments will not be permitted to dictate the ability of any Marylander to make their own decisions about their bodies or their lives. HB 812 will allow victims of domestic violence access to the crucial health care they need and the support they deserve as they work to heal from the trauma of the abuse they experienced.

For the above stated reasons, the **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence urges a favorable report on HB 812.**

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