

## House Health & Government Operations Committee

### **Senate Bill 786: Health - Reproductive Health Services - Protected Information and Insurance Requirements**

**March 29, 2023**

**\*\*Support\*\***

The Maryland Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers represents social workers statewide. We strongly support Senate Bill 786: Health - Reproductive Health Services - Protected Information and Insurance Requirements. Without this legislation, Maryland patients and providers will be placed at great legal risk for the provision of abortion and other reproductive health care within our state borders.

On June 22, 2022, millions of Marylanders lost the fundamental right of bodily autonomy. With the Dobbs decision, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v Wade and eliminated constitutional protections for abortion rights. Justice Clarence Thomas also suggested that other protections, such as the right to birth control, may also be called into question.

Since the Dobbs decision, fourteen states have implemented abortion bans, including our neighboring state of West Virginia. By the end of this year, we could see about half the states banning or severely restricting abortion. These states are also adopting aggressive tactics to intimidate and even criminalize residents who travel out-of-state to seek abortion care. These tactics are creating a chilling effect on providers in states like Maryland. Abortion remains protected in our state, but our providers, including social workers who may be providing counseling, are concerned about attempts of restrictive states to impose criminal, civil, and administrative penalties.

We ask the Maryland General Assembly to protect Maryland abortion providers and other providers of support services, and their patients. Electronic health records, which contain abortion information, flow routinely across state borders through health information exchange. This means that any restrictive state that issues a court order to one of our patient's out-of-state providers will be able to obtain abortion-related records – putting providers and patients in legal jeopardy.

We ask for a favorable report.

Mary Beth DeMartino, LCSW-C  
Executive Director, NASW-MD