



**COMMISSION FOR WOMEN
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CLUSTER**

February 17, 2023
Delegate Joseline Pena-Melnyk
Chair, House Health and Government Operations Committee
241 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB 705 Declaration of Rights – Right to Reproductive Freedom

Position: **SUPPORT**

Dear Chairperson Pena-Melnyk, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

On behalf of the Montgomery County, Maryland Commission for Women, I, Commissioner Elizabeth Richards, am writing to ask for your support of HB 705 — Declaration of Rights—Right to Reproductive Freedom. The proposed legislation would allow Marylanders to vote for a constitutional amendment to enshrine the rights of individuals to make their own reproductive healthcare decisions.

Montgomery County Commission for Women advocates for legislation that promotes the equal and full participation of women and girls in every aspect of community living and access to education, healthcare, and work advancement with political and economic power. Reproductive choice is necessary for equal and full participation in all facets of society.

Marylanders’ right to make their own decisions regarding their reproductive health is jeopardized by the US Supreme Court’s decision in *Dobbs vs. Jackson Women’s Health*. By ruling in favor of the state of Mississippi and overturning *Roe v. Wade*, the US Supreme Court showcased their willingness to disregard past precedent and established rights that had previously been protected under the right to privacy. Even though there is the perception that Maryland is a safe state for reproductive choice, that freedom is grounded a series of legal status rooted in the right to privacy. If those legal status are overturned, reproductive freedom within Maryland may be called into question. **For these reasons, a constitutional amendment is needed to protect reproductive freedom within the state, and Marylanders should have the opportunity to vote for it in 2024.** Marylanders must be afforded the opportunity to vote on a constitutional amendment for reproductive freedom. Therefore, I urge a favorable report on HB 705.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Richards
Member, Policy & Legislative Committee
Montgomery County Commission for Women