



**TESTIMONY IN FAVOR WITH AMENDMENTS OF SENATE BILL 859:
Reproductive Health Protection Act**

TO: Chair, Senator Will Smith of Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Sharon Blugis, Interim Executive Director, Pro-Choice Maryland
DATE: Tuesday, February 28, 2023

Pro-Choice Maryland is an independent, nonprofit organization that develops and advocates for policies that protect reproductive freedom and that advance reproductive justice. **Pro-Choice Maryland strongly supports the right of ALL individuals to full bodily autonomy and to unequivocal control over their own health and healthcare decisions including their private health records and to protect health care providers and patients.**

This legislation states unequivocally that Maryland will not support out-of-state investigations about legal reproductive health care in our state. We will not support other states that seek to intimidate our providers and threaten their state residents who travel to Maryland to seek reproductive health care. Our courts will not process subpoenas, our state agencies will not provide records, and law enforcement will not cooperate with states investigated legal reproductive health care in our state. With this bill, we will protect health care providers, patients, and the people who support patients in their reproductive health decisions from criminal charges, civil litigation, and administrative penalties. We will only have reproductive freedom in Maryland if we shield ourselves from the threats and intimidation tactics of other states.

However, we believe this bill does not go far enough to provide protection for those providers who give gender-affirming care. Maryland has long been a safe haven for people seeking care that isn't available in their own states. In continuing to be a haven state, we must protect the people who are on the front lines of offering both abortion care and gender-affirming care without equivocation. Pro-Choice Maryland fully supports the autonomy and protection of trans people and their care providers.

As reproductive rights advocates, it is our firm and unequivocal belief that protecting abortion care and gender-affirming care is essential to protecting the reproductive freedom of all Marylanders. We will not leave our trans siblings behind for the sake of political expediency. We must work together to ensure both abortion access and health equity for transgender and gender non-conforming people is protected this legislative session. As legislators committed to protecting abortion access and LGBTQ rights, we call on you to commit to include gender-affirming care and include it in the abortion shielding bill.