



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

P.O. Box 34047, Bethesda, MD 20827

www.womensdemocraticclub.org

**Senate Bill 859 - Reproductive Health Protection Act
Judicial Proceedings – March 1, 2023
SUPPORT**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2023 legislative session. WDC is one of Maryland's largest and most active Democratic clubs with hundreds of politically active members, including many elected officials.

WDC urges the passage of SB0859. This bill will "shield" women patients, their providers, and their support networks from legal action by a state where health care that is legal in Maryland, is illegal in that state. "Legally protected health care" includes all lawful reproductive health services, medications, and supplies related to the direct provision or support of care related to pregnancy, contraception, assisted reproduction, and abortion.

This bill prohibits a judge from requiring a person to give testimony, a statement, or produce evidence in another state for a case involving an alleged violation of that state's criminal law relating to legally protected health care in Maryland. This bill also prohibits the governor from surrendering a person to another state if the violation would not be a crime in Maryland. It further prohibits state and local authorities and private parties from assisting in an interstate investigation related to legally protected health care. It prohibits health occupations boards from disciplining a health care practitioner or applicant because of the provision of legally protected health care, including practitioners that may have been disciplined in another state for such care. It also prohibits insurers from taking adverse actions against health care practitioners that provide legally protected health care.

With the Supreme Court's decision to overturn the federal protections of *Roe v. Wade* and let individual states determine whether a woman can terminate her pregnancy, it is more critical than ever to protect all women's reproductive rights in Maryland. It is anticipated that nearly half of the States will outlaw or severely restrict the right to abortion care, and that Maryland will become an abortion care "safe haven" for women from these states. Some states have already enacted laws that create liability for anyone assisting their residents to obtain abortion care, including providers in states where abortion is legal. These laws are designed to intimidate people seeking abortion care, as well as volunteers and health care providers supporting out-of-state patients. This shielding bill will protect individuals seeking abortion care in Maryland from criminal, civil, and administrative liability from their home states. It will also support continued access to care for Maryland residents by ensuring health care providers and supportive organizations can continue to operate without legal threats from other states.

A woman's right to reproductive health and freedom is one of WDC's top priorities. We ask for your support for SB0859 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.

Diana E. Conway
WDC President

Ginger Macomber
WDC Advocacy Committee