



Hearing Date: March 8, 2023

Testimony on HB808 – POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS
Reproductive Health Protection Act

To: Chair Clippinger and Members, House Judiciary Committee
From: The Jewish Community Relations Council, Howard County, MD
Betsy Singer and Laura Salganik, Co-Chairs

The Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) of Howard County supports passage of HB808, amended to include gender-affirming care.

Americans' access to health care is under assault. Millions of women can no longer access surgical and medical abortion care in their home states. Activists are now attempting to thwart their ability to receive that care from out-of-state providers, including Maryland practitioners. We are alarmed at the threat these legal challenges pose to out-of-state patients, to those that refer them to care, to those who provide transportation, and to Maryland clinicians.

We are equally concerned about legal threats to gender-affirming care. We recognize the importance of this care for our vulnerable LGBTQ population. We understand the importance of puberty blockers in the care of minors to prevent the physical changes that do not conform with their gender identity.

Abortion and gender-affirming care are both affirmed under Jewish law. Abridging them violates free practice of religion. Jewish legal scholars have maintained for centuries that a fetus, dependent on its mother for life, is a part of the mother rather than its own person. When difficult decisions are faced which require weighing the interests of the mother against the incipient life of the fetus, the mother's interests prevail.^{1,2} Jewish law has also embraced an individual's right to seek gender-affirming care.³

Maryland clinicians must be enabled to act in their patients' best interest, unencumbered by legal obstacles. We urge passage of this bill amended to address both reproductive and gender-affirming care.

¹ Rosner, Dr. Fred, "The Fetus in Jewish Law", <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-fetus-in-jewish-law/>, retrieved March 6, 2023.

² Grossman, Rabbi Susan, "Partial Birth Abortion and the Question of When Human Life Begins", 2001. <https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/jewish-law/committee-jewish-law-and-standards/teshuvot-database>.

³ Sharzer, Rabbi Leonard A. MD, "Transgender Jews and Halakhah", 2017, page 20. <https://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/jewish-law/committee-jewish-law-and-standards/teshuvotdatabase>.