



## Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

### Testimony in Support of SB 859 - The Reproductive Health Protection Act

TO: Senator Will Smith, Jr. Chair and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee  
FROM: Kari Alperovitz-Bichell, MD MPH, Advocate for Reproductive Health Care Rights  
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland,  
DATE: March 1, 2023

I am Kari Alperovitz-Bichell, MD representing both myself, as a physician, and also representing the Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland.

We urge your support for SB 859 - The Reproductive Health Protection Act, which would protect medical providers, patients, and their support networks from out-of-state investigations for needed reproductive healthcare. We also urge that this bill be amended to include shielding for gender affirming care.

This is a somewhat complex bill, but from both my medical and my faith perspectives, all of its provisions are very important.

As a primary care physician who provides reproductive health services, I am quite worried that fear of out-of-state lawsuits, prosecutions, and investigations will soon have a chilling effect on provision of needed health care services in Maryland. Physicians ought to be able to focus on providing the best treatment possible for every patient seeking our care, rather than worrying about whether a patient might have “snuck in” from some other state, and that caring for them will put us at risk for criminal prosecution or financial ruin. Furthermore, scarce healthcare resources in Maryland should not be wasted attempting to determine in which state a patient legally resides.

But more fundamentally for me and my fellow Unitarian Universalists, I am called by the first principle of my faith to affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every human being. Our faith recognizes a universal human need for safe and dignified reproductive health care, a need that does not stop at state lines. And, because we also believe that health care should be available to those in need, including the poor, we strongly support the provisions in this bill that eliminates co-pays and deductibles for abortion care.

Also flowing directly from our Unitarian Universalist affirmation of the inherent worth and dignity of every human being, we believe that gender affirming care is vital care, and as such should be shielded from the intimidating effect of other states' laws, in the same manner as the reproductive healthcare that this bill defines.

Therefore, we urge you to vote yes on SB 859, and to amend it to include gender affirming care as legally protected healthcare.

Respectfully submitted,  
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