

Christine O'Donovan-Zavada  
Allentown, PA 18102

**Support**  
**HB 808 - Reproductive Health Protection Act**  
**Maryland House Judiciary Committee**  
**March 8, 2023**

In the summer of 2018, because of a broken condom and a failure of emergency contraception, I got pregnant. It took several weeks of violent nausea for me to realize the emergency contraception had likely failed. When my pregnancy test came back positive, I felt a horrible pit in my stomach. I felt a total lack of control, like my body had been hijacked without my consent. My decision was not difficult - I knew immediately that I needed an abortion.

Pennsylvania has a politically motivated and paternalistic 24-hour waiting period that requires people who have to travel far distances to get to a clinic to go for two days - and 87% of Pennsylvania Counties do not have abortion clinics. So rather than drive twice to the nearest clinic, I decided to drive a little farther, but just once, to Baltimore. When I arrived, the clinic staff were wonderful. They talked me through what I could expect, and made sure I felt safe and comfortable with my decision. It was a refuge.

I also had an incredible network of friends that helped me both monetarily and emotionally, a job that supported me and provided time off, and a car I could rely on for travel. But now, with the overturn of *Roe*, that pit in my stomach has returned. I know to the core of my being that if I had been in a place where I couldn't legally access abortion, I would have found a way to end my pregnancy, at whatever risk to my life. I might not have survived but I know I wouldn't have carried to term.

Twelve states have banned abortion outright, and several have added criminal and civil penalties for patients like me, clinic staff, and the friends who supported me. Since the fall of *Roe*, I have been thinking constantly about the people facing the same decision I did, with the same conviction I had, often with fewer resources and more barriers than I had, making that same trip to Maryland for refuge just like I did. They deserve every protection this state can afford them.

The Reproductive Health Protection Act will ensure that if the care was provided in Maryland—as mine was—that it is exactly that: health care. Not a criminal issue. Not a civil issue. So for me, for my friends, and for my health care providers who saved my life, I urge a favorable report on HB 808 and thank you for your time.