



Bill No: SB859
Title: Reproductive Health Protection Act
Committee: Judiciary
Hearing: March 28, 2023
Position: SUPPORT

The Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (MLAW) is a statewide coalition of women’s groups and individuals formed to provide a non-partisan, independent voice for Maryland women and families. MLAW’s purpose is to advocate for legislation affecting women and families. To accomplish this goal, MLAW creates an annual legislative agenda with issues voted on by MLAW members and endorsed by organizations and individuals from all over Maryland. **SB859 - Declaration of Rights - Right to Reproductive Freedom** is a priority on the [2023 MLAW Agenda](#) and we urge your support.

SB859 will create protections in our laws for pregnant individuals seeking abortion care, as well as those providing support to pregnant individuals (including health care providers, support organizations, and volunteers), from civil, criminal, and administrative liability.

In the wake of the Supreme Court’s decision in Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health in overturning Roe v. Wade, it is anticipated that nearly half the states will outlaw or severely restrict the right to abortion care. In the six months since Dobbs, fourteen states have banned nearly all abortion care, and some of those states have enacted laws that create liability for anyone assisting their residents obtain abortion care even in states where abortion remains legal. These laws are designed to intimidate people seeking abortion care, as well as volunteers and health care providers supporting out-of-state patients. The Reproductive Health Protection Act will counteract these extreme efforts by ensuring patients, providers, and support networks cannot be subject to criminal, civil, or administrative penalties within Maryland for supporting the provision of abortion care.

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 and individuals can continue to operate without legal threats from other states.

Communities of color are particularly impacted by limitations on abortion access. As we know, significant racial and ethnic disparities persist for a wide range of health outcomes, from diabetes to heart disease to breast and cervical cancer to sexually transmitted infections (STI), including HIV. This is also true for unintended pregnancies. Unnecessary barriers to abortion care increase costs and wait times, further exacerbating existing health disparities and economic injustices. The criminal justice system has been disproportionately abused to negatively impact People of Color and empowering citizenry in states to target anyone who has received or is suspected of receiving or providing abortion care increases the very real risks to those communities.

For these reasons, MLAW strongly urges the passage of SB859.

Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women
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MLAW 2023 Supporting Organizations

The following organizations have signed on in support of our 2023 Legislative Agenda*:

AAUW Anne Arundel County
AAUW Howard County
AAUW Maryland
Advocacy and Training Center
Allegany County Women's Action Coalition
Anne Arundel County NOW
Aspire Ascend
Baltimore County State Democratic Central Committee
Bound for Better
Business and Professional Women of Maryland
Charles County Commission for Women
Climate Xchange Maryland
Drake Institute of Women's Policy
Empowered Women in Business International
ERA Coalition
For All Seasons, Inc.
Kensington-Rockville AAUW
Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA)
Maryland Commission for Women
Maryland NOW
Maryland WISE Women
Miller Partnership Consultants LLC
MoCoWoMen
Montgomery County Business & Professional Women (MC BPW)
Montgomery County Chapter, National Organization for Women
Montgomery County Commission for Women
Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club
National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Prince George's County Chapter
National Women of Achievement, Inc.
Planned Parenthood of Maryland
Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan Washington, DC
Reproductive Justice Inside
Southern Prince George's Business and Professional Women
Top Ladies of Distinction, Inc., Prince George's County Chapter
University of Baltimore School of Law If/When/How Chapter
Women's Democratic League of Frederick County
Women's Equity Center and Action Network (WE CAN)
Women's Law Center of Maryland
Zonta Club of Annapolis
Zonta Club of Mid-Maryland

**as of 2/3/2023*

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