

Favorable Statement SB862
Public Health - Pregnancy - Coercion
(Protecting Pregnant Women Against Coercive Abuse and Human Trafficking)
Deborah Brocato, Campaign to Protect Women

On behalf of all of our followers across the state of Maryland, Campaign to Protect Women is strongly in favor of SB832. I am also the mother of 4 daughters and a retired intensive care nurse.

Since 1991, the Maryland Freedom of Choice Act has permitted abortion on demand for any reason through birth. Until last year, a physician was required to provide abortions and the decision was between “a woman and her doctor.” A physician also determined if parental notification for minor girls was necessary. Last year, the Assembly passed the Abortion Care Access Act which removed the physician requirement and now allows a “qualified provider” certified by the state, who may or may not have a medical background, to provide surgical and chemical abortions through birth. Both chemical and surgical abortions carry risk of injury up to and including death.

This Assembly has also expanded scope of practice for many healthcare practitioners including the authority to prescribe and dispense medications including the lethal chemical abortion drugs. Telehealth allows the dangerous abortion drugs to be prescribed without benefit of the physical exam to determine gestational age or gestational abnormalities such as ectopic pregnancy or molar pregnancy. Telehealth cannot determine who will be taking the prescription and if it will be taken voluntarily.

All of these changes to healthcare delivery have made it easier for the abortion industry to prey on women and girls. These changes have made it easier for sex traffickers and other abusers to continue their coercive and criminal behavior.

The SAFETY of the women and girls of Maryland has been sacrificed for ACCESS. More access does not equal more quality.

Watching the increasing state promotion of the abortion industry and the steady removal of standards of care, I think of my 4 daughters and the many young women I assisted at a crisis pregnancy center for over 8 years.

I think about my daughters and many other young girls, high school and college girls who do not need parental consent to undergo surgical or chemical abortion. The abortion industry has turned pregnancy and motherhood into something to be dreaded instead of the cherished gift that it is. How many of these girls will feel pressured by boyfriends, teachers, college professors, etc. to “make this inconvenience go away?” **How many will suffer injury or death because their**

parents are unaware their daughter is post-abortive with infection or hemorrhage but think it's the flu or she is simply run down?

I think of the young women from the pregnancy center who had experienced abortion. They would say, "I can't kill another baby!" They revealed how it was their boyfriend or their family members insisting they must get an abortion. No one offered support. No one suggested a crisis pregnancy center. They felt backed into a corner.

I think of the 15 year old girl at the Planned Parenthood on Howard Street in Baltimore City. I was praying across the street when a group approached - a 15 year old girl, her aunt, her grandmother and her uncle. Tears were streaming down the girl's face. I provided information about crisis pregnancy centers. The women stood just in front of the girl and said the boyfriend wouldn't help, she was too young and she "must" get the abortion. Again, I mentioned the crisis pregnancy centers. The women said they had made their decision, not the girl had made the decision. The uncle said nothing. The girl continued to cry. They all went in, and an hour later, I left without seeing them exit.

Similar stories can be found at www.silentnomoreawareness.com and www.rachelsvineyard.org.

In these cases and many others, it is clear these young girls are pointed in only one direction. They are prevented from seeking alternate solutions. They are coerced into taking a permanent action for a temporary condition which can cause physical, emotional and psychological injury. In each of these situations, the young girls go into the abortion center and receive the abortion during that visit. If there is a consultation, it is with a virtual stranger and there is not adequate time to think about a decision that cannot be reversed. When making material purchases, returns are possible within a certain time frame. This is a purchase that cannot be returned.

Something I would say to the young ladies at the pregnancy center, "When you find out you're pregnant, you're not having the baby the next day. You have 6 or 7 months to plan for the baby, and we will help you." When framed that way, having a baby didn't seem so scary anymore.

Campaign to Protect Women urges this committee to respect and protect a woman's right to motherhood. Protect women and girls from abusers and sex traffickers. **We urge you to remember the many women who cherish their pregnancy and seek support and think of all the women and girls are enslaved by sex traffickers. We strongly recommend that you give a favorable report on SB862.**