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Chair, Joint Subcommittee on  
Program Open Space/Agricultural  
Land Preservation

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 6, 2024

**Testimony in Favor of SB 975  
Supporting Reproductive Health Care Clinics Act**

Chairman Beidle, Vice-Chair Klausmeier, and members of the Finance Committee,

I respectfully request a favorable report of Senate Bill 975 to ensure safe access to reproductive health care in Maryland.

**Reproductive health care clinics are experiencing an epidemic of violence threatening access to care.** A 2022 study found a sharp increase in incidents of violence in states which are protective of access to reproductive care. Since 1977, the United States has seen 11 murders, 42 bombings, 200 arsons, 531 assaults, 492 clinic invasions, 375 burglaries, and thousands of other incidents of criminal activity toward patients, providers, and volunteers<sup>1</sup>. Following the Supreme Court's decision in the *Dobbs*<sup>2</sup> case overturning *Roe v. Wade*, reproductive health clinics experienced a significant increase in violent and threatening incidents. These incidents include:

- Stalking rose 229% (from 28 in 2021 to 92 in 2022)
- Burglary rose 231% (from 13 in 2021 to 43 in 2022)
- Arson increased by 100% (from 2 in 2021 to 4 in 2022)
- Invasions increased by 25% (from 16 in 2021 to 20 in 2022)
- There was a 100% increase in anthrax/bioterrorism threats in the past decade (from 2 between 2010-2021 to 4 in 2022)
- Protective states saw a disproportionate increase in violence and disruption:
  - Stalking increased by 913% (from 8 in 2021 to 81 in 2022)
  - Obstructions increased 538% (from 45 in 2021 to 287 in 2022)
  - Bomb threats increased by 133% (from 3 in 2021 to 7 in 2022)
  - Burglaries increased by 100% (from 5 in 2021 to 10 in 2022)
  - Assault and batteries increased by 29% (from 7 in 2021 to 9 in 2022)
  - Hoax Devices/Suspicious Packages increased by 21% (from 47 in 2021 to 57 in 2022)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://prochoice.org/violence-against-abortion-providers-continues-to-rise-following-roe-reversal-new-report-finds/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/21pdf/19-1392\\_6j37.pdf](https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/21pdf/19-1392_6j37.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://prochoice.org/our-work/provider-security/2022-naf-violence-disruption/>

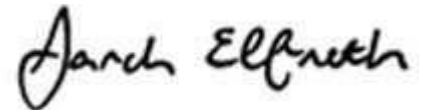
The United States Department of Justice indicated that incidents of violence against reproductive health clinics nationwide range from spray painted graffiti to bombing clinics. Incidents prosecuted by the USDOJ include:

- 2022 - Philadelphia, Pennsylvania - a defendant as indicted on federal charges after assaulting a Planned Parenthood clinic escort, assaulting the escort twice on the same date resulting in bodily injury.
- 2021 - Columbus, Ohio - a defendant pled guilty to federal offenses for two separate threats called in by phone to a local clinic, including threats to kill a patient and later a bomb threat. The defendant was sentenced to one year and one day in prison.
- 2019 - Columbia, Missouri - a defendant pled guilty to federal felony offenses for throwing a Molotov cocktail at a clinic and sentenced to five years imprisonment<sup>4</sup>.

**Violence against patients, providers, volunteers, and clinics are threatening Marylanders' rights to access to reproductive health care.** SB 975 takes a meaningful step in supporting reproductive health clinics and those they serve. The bill establishes a grant program administered by the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCPP). Grant funds may be used to establish physical security infrastructure at reproductive health clinics to support safe access to care. This grant program will provide meaningful security to patients, providers, volunteers, and clinics amidst ongoing and increased violence threatening access to care.

I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 975.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Elfreth". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Senator Sarah Elfreth  
District 30

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.justice.gov/crt/recent-cases-violence-against-reproductive-health-care-providers>