
Planned Parenthood of Maryland

Committee:	Senate Finance Committee
Bill Number:	Senate Bill 975 - Public Safety – Reproductive Health Care Clinic Security Grant Program – Establishment (Supporting Reproductive Health Care Clinics Act)
Hearing:	March 6, 2024
Position:	Favorable with Amendments

Planned Parenthood of Maryland (PPM) supports *SB 975— Public Safety – Reproductive Health Care Clinic Security Grant Program – Establishment (Supporting Reproductive Health Care Clinics Act)*. This bill creates the Reproductive Health Care Clinic Security Grant Program in the Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention, Youth and Victim Services (GOCPYVS). The Program will assist Maryland’s reproductive health care clinics with costs associated with security improvements .

Planned Parenthood of Maryland wholeheartedly supports the intent of this bill. However, PPM has two concerns with the legislation as drafted:

1. “Reproductive Health Care Clinic” is not defined. If the intention of the bill is to assist clinics that provide legally protected but controversial health care, including abortion and gender affirming treatment, we suggest that the bill language explicitly state that intent. As it is currently drafted, this bill could be used by any number of anti-abortion sites that purport to offer “reproductive healthcare” but in fact offer no health services at all. Theoretically, crisis pregnancy centers--which the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists claims by using “deception, delay tactics, and disinformation, CPC staffs undermine the tenets of informed consent and patient autonomy and impede access to comprehensive, ethical care”¹ -- could apply to the Program for support.

¹ <https://www.acog.org/advocacy/abortion-is-essential/trending-issues/issue-brief-crisis-pregnancy-centers>

2. While GOCPYVS is tasked with providing resources to improve public safety, we believe the providers that would be accessing the program would be better served by going to the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) who have a better grasp on the unique issues associated with clinic security. Further, abortion care is heavily stigmatized nationally; applying to the State's office responsible for criminal justice sends the message that the healthcare we provide is a criminal justice matter. For that reason we hope the sponsor will consider amending the legislation so the program is managed by MDH.

The physical safety of our providers, patients, their families and our staff is of paramount importance to Planned Parenthood of Maryland. Since 1977, well before the fall of *Roe*, there have been thousands of criminal activities directed at abortion providers, patients and support staff. The National Abortion Federation (NAF) reports that there have been 531 assaults, 492 clinic invasions, 375 burglaries, 200 arsons, 42 bombings and 11 murders directed at abortion care facilities, their providers and patients since 1977.² According to the same report, the 2022 violence and disruption statistics show a devastating increase in violence in states, like Maryland, that protect abortion rights. In 2021 there were 28 instances of stalking patients or providers nationwide, just a year later in 2022 that number rose sharply to 92 incidents. That same year there was also a 100% increase in the number of clinic arsons compared to 2021. Most concerning for Marylanders is that the NAF data shows "in 2022, many anti-abortion extremists shifted their attention to protective states after dozens of clinics were forced to close in states that banned abortion. Clinics in protective states saw a disproportionate increase in violence and disruption."

At Planned Parenthood of Maryland, our patients and staff must not only face vile comments to enter clinics, they are also subject to threats of violence and destruction, harassment and acts of physical aggression for accessing and providing legally protected healthcare. Since 2022 there have been 60 reported incidents at PPM clinics. One of the most egregious occurred in December 2023 when a known, violent protestor, followed a PPM doctor to their car. Later that day the same protestor followed a patient around a corner after they exited the clinic. This bill will have an immediate positive impact on the physical safety of our facilities and the people within by providing a funding mechanism to help providers meet their everchanging physical security needs.

If we can provide any additional information, please contact Erin Bradley at erin.bradley@ppm.care or (443) 604-3544.

² <https://prochoice.org/wp-content/uploads/2022-VD-Report-FINAL.pdf>