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TESTIMONY ON HB1233 - UNFAVORABLE

Public Health - Abortion

My name is Lindy Wittenberg, and I have worked and volunteered in reproductive freedom and rights policy for over four years. On behalf of Pro-Choice Maryland Action, I am submitting this testimony in opposition to HB1233 - “Public Health: Abortion.”

There are millions of individuals across the country who can bear children and who face insurmountable barriers to abortion care every day, whether it be cost, travel time, legality, or logistics. These barriers have risen tenfold since the overruling of *Roe v. Wade* in 2022. When the Abortion Care Access Act – which Pro-Choice Maryland worked to help pass in 2022– was conceptualized, it sought to address the avalanche of barriers to care that followed the *Roe* decision. By allowing qualified health practitioners to administer abortion care, it expanded access to abortion – something we desperately needed after access crumbled for millions in states where abortion is now illegal.

HB1233 would overturn the Abortion Care Access Act. HB1233 would only allow qualified physicians to perform abortions – severely limiting who is able to legally perform abortions and overturning past legislation that allows qualified providers (such as nurse practitioners and midwives) to perform abortion care. The majority of abortions are performed in the first trimester, sometimes with a D&C (dilation and curettage), and often by using the “abortion pill,” a method that combines two medicines (mifepristone and misoprostol) to induce abortion. This method is incredibly safe, and incredibly simple to administer. Administering the abortion pill does require knowledge of procedures and the (very rare and limited) risks associated with it, but does not require a physician to administer. A six year study from 2013 conducted by UCSF found that first trimester abortions are just as safe when performed by trained nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and certified nurse midwives as when conducted by physicians.

Maryland must remain a state where abortion is accessible, and HB1233 would create another barrier to access. At this time, abortion access is critical. As someone who has been in this fight for years, and listened to countless peers, friends, and family’s abortion stories, I have realized the importance of accessible abortion beyond just quantitative statistics. Abortion has allowed my friends and family members to pursue their careers, hobbies and interests. It has allowed them to choose when and with whom to start a family. It has allowed them to live their lives on their own terms.

Abortion is safe, necessary, and must remain accessible in Maryland. **On behalf of Pro-Choice Maryland Action, I strongly urge this committee to return an unfavorable support on HB1233.**