

Testimony in Favor of HB 0884

By Michael J. New, Ph.D.

Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee. I live in Hyattsville, MD and I speak to you as a concerned citizen that support HB 0884 “Protecting Pregnant Women Against Coercive Abuse and Human Trafficking.” I have a Ph.D. in Political Science and a Masters Degree in Statistics both from Stanford University. I am an Assistant Professor of Practice at the Busch School of Business at the Catholic University of America. I am also a Senior Associate Scholar at the Charlotte Lozier Institute, the research and education arm of the Susan B. Anthony List. I am familiar with the current academic research pertaining to pregnancy and abortion.

Regardless of one’s stance on abortion, everyone should agree that coercing or pressuring a woman to obtain an abortion is wrong. Furthermore, this is a larger problem than many realize. A May 2023 study that appeared in the journal *Cureus* surveyed over 1,000 women between the ages of 41 and 45. The survey identified over 200 that obtained abortions. Of those women who obtained abortions, 24 percent reported that the abortion was unwanted or coerced.¹ A 2022 poll conducted by the British Broadcasting Company found that 15 percent of women said they had experienced unwanted pressure to terminate a pregnancy.² Also, a 2014 study by Laura Lederer and Christopher Wetzel in *The Annals of Health Law* entitled “The Health Consequences of Sex Trafficking” found 55 percent of trafficked women reported at least one abortion.³

On a personal note, I also help organize a pro-life sidewalk ministry outside the Washington, DC Planned Parenthood. There are situations I have encountered that lead me to believe some women are being coerced or pressured into obtaining an abortion. On one occasion a woman snuck out of the Planned Parenthood without her partner’s knowledge and sought a ride away from the Planned Parenthood from one of our sidewalk counselors. On another occasion, a woman who was dropped off at the Planned Parenthood by a male partner was happily picked up minutes later by a group of friends. There is a good chance her friends came to rescue her from her partner.

Again, no pregnant women should be forced to obtain an abortion against her will. Please vote in favor of HB 0884.

¹ Reardon D C, Rafferty K A, & Longbons T (May 11, 2023) The Effects of Abortion Decision Rightness and Decision Type on Women’s Satisfaction and Mental Health. *Cureus* 15(5): e38882. DOI 10.7759/cureus.38882

² Harte A & Stonehouse R. “Reproductive Coercion: I Was Not Allowed to Take My Pill.” *bbc.com*. 2022, 13 March. <https://www.bbc.com/news/newsbeat-60646285> (Accessed March 13, 2024)

³ Lederer L J & Wetzel C A (2014) The Health Consequences of Sex Trafficking and Their Implications for Identifying Victims in Healthcare Facilities. *Annals of Health Law* 23: 61-91