

SB0848 - the Public Health Abortion Grant Program.

Position - Favorable

March 4, 2025

To the Honorable Chair and Members of the Maryland Senate Finance Committee

My name is Lesley Frost and I am the Co Chair of National Council of Jewish Women, Maryland State Policy Advocacy Committee (NCJW MDSPA) and I am writing to express strong support for SB0848 - the Public Health Abortion Grant Program.

SB0848 builds on the work last year that passed a constitutional amendment guaranteeing the right to abortion in Maryland. That right however, does not come with a guarantee of access to abortion care. Unlike other health care services there is no public grant funding for abortion and since the Dobbs decision, the increased need for abortion services has dictated a need for an increase in public donations to cover that care. The cost of abortion care in Maryland averages between \$400 to over \$2 000 depending on the type of procedure needed.

Maryland Medicaid coverage of abortion services is strictly controlled and difficult to access and although private insurance plans that cover labor and delivery must also cover abortion care, not all Maryland residents have medical insurance, and out of state patients, traveling here for abortion care denied them in their own state, have to find their own financing.

To address this financial need the abortion funding organizations, and clinics, raise money and the competition for their scarce dollars is intense. Today they are facing budget shortfalls and the possibility of closing and HB 930 by making 90% of grant money available directly to abortion care providers and nonprofit funds, would help them remain in business, and address the current need for their services.

The Public Health Abortion Grant Program provides an innovative method of funding abortion care and sets a new national model for creating access to abortion services. The money for this program comes from an existing surplus in segregated insurance accounts (set aside by the Affordable Care Act) to reimburse abortion providers and nonprofit funds, and no taxpayer funds would be involved.

The support for SB0848, the Public Health Abortion Grant Program is based on NCJW resolution IV.2, "The advancement of every person's right to reproductive freedom, including access to legal abortion, medically accurate information, contraception, fertility treatments, adoption, and the elimination of obstacles that limit reproductive justice."

On behalf of the more than 700 advocates of the National Council of Jewish Women in Maryland, I strongly urge the committee to support SB0848, the Public Health Abortion Grant Program, and continue the “advancement of every person’s right to reproductive freedom.”

Thank you for considering this testimony.

Lesley Frost
7707 Wisconsin Avenue
Bethesda MD 20814
lesleyfrost0@gmail.com

Co Chair NCJW MDSPA
ncjw.mdacts@gmail.com