



March 6, 2025

In Support of SB 848: Public Health Abortion Grant Program – Establishment

Dear Chairs Beidle and Guzzone,

Now that Marylanders have enshrined the right to abortion in the state constitution, SB 848 will create a ground-breaking, innovative program to secure access to that right.

This bill will create a public health grant program to support equitable access to abortion care in Maryland. The Program will provide support for abortion care to people who are uninsured and underinsured and will be managed by the Department of Health, just as all other public health grant programs.

The Program is funded by unspent premiums for abortion coverage. Since those funds cannot be returned, the legislation reinvests the funding in public health grants. There is approximately

\$25 million that has accumulated in surplus funds between 2014 and 2024. It is anticipated that the surplus funds will accrue an additional \$3 million a year.

We as local, state, and national groups, urge a favorable report on SB 848 to affirm Maryland's commitment to individuals' reproductive rights and access to healthcare, and to create a model for other states to follow your lead.

Overview:

The Abortion Landscape and the Emerging Funding Crisis

Access to abortion care is at risk in Maryland because of the tumultuous national landscape. Our healthcare system is stretched in meeting the needs of everyone who turns to them for abortion care. Anti-abortion advocates have been working for decades to marginalize abortion care since its legalization with *Roe v Wade*.

On the federal level, measures such as the Hyde Amendment have prohibited federal funding for abortion care. As a result, unlike other health care services – family planning, breast and cervical cancer screening, and prenatal services – **there is no public grant funding for abortion care.**

After the *Dobbs* decision, there was a surge of donations to abortion funds. Abortion funds are organizations or groups that provide financial assistance to people seeking abortions due to the lack of federal funding and state and local budget capacity. Their primary goal is to help individuals cover the costs associated with obtaining an abortion, which can include the procedure itself, travel expenses, lodging, and childcare. Many people seeking abortions face financial barriers, and abortion funds aim to alleviate these burdens, making reproductive healthcare more accessible. But those same funds have reached a funding cliff as donors' limited dollars are being spread thin across many causes. There are serious repercussions for the abortion provider landscape and access to care in Maryland and across the country.

Model for Other States

Maryland has the opportunity to lead the nation by creating a sustainable grant program to advance equitable access to abortion care. As patients need to travel to safe states to seek this care, cost becomes ever-mounting. Maryland's first-in-the-nation approach could become a model for other states to create their own equity-based grant programs.

Conclusion:

The state needs a safety net to support abortion for people without sufficient resources. However, there are no public health grant programs to support abortion care.

With SB 848, Maryland would create equitable access to abortion care through a public health grant program. This legislation affirms that abortion care *is* healthcare.

With the *Dobbs* decision, the Supreme Court reversed 50-years of legal protection for abortion care. Maryland has stood strong in ensuring abortion remains accessible within the state. SB 848 is a continuation of Maryland's long-standing fight for reproductive freedom, one that we fully support.

We, the undersigned organizations, ask for a favorable report on SB 848.

Sincerely,

AAUW Maryland

American College of Nurse Midwives – Maryland Affiliate

Hadassah Greater Baltimore

Health Care for the Homeless

Jacobs Institute of Women's Health

JCRC of Greater Washington

Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance

Montgomery County, MD, National Organization for Women

Montgomery County Young Democrats

Maryland Academy of Physician Assistants

Mountain Maryland Alliance for Reproductive Freedom (MMARF)

National Association of Social Workers – Maryland Chapter

National Network of Abortion Funds

National Women's Law Center

NCJW Maryland SPA

Physicians for Reproductive Health

The Reproductive Health Access Project

The Reproductive Health Access Project - Mid-Atlantic RHAP Chapter

SiX Action

The Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)

Women's Law Center of Maryland