



NATIONAL NETWORK OF
ABORTION FUNDS

March 4, 2025

Senator Pamela Beidle, Chair
Senate Finance Committee
Maryland General Assembly
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Testimony of the National Network of Abortion Funds
In Support of S.B. 848: Public Health Abortion Grant Program - Establishment**

Dear Chair Beidle and distinguished members of the Senate Finance Committee:

The National Network of Abortion Funds (NNAF) submits this testimony in strong support of S.B. 848, which would establish a **first-of-its-kind public health abortion grant program** to increase access to abortion and resource the support network of abortion funds and providers in Maryland. NNAF is a national membership organization of nearly 100 independent abortion funds located across the United States, including the Baltimore Abortion Fund in Maryland. Abortion funds exist because it is challenging, if not impossible, for many people to get the abortions they want and need without financial and logistical support. That longstanding abortion access gap has become a full-blown crisis, and abortion funds are struggling to meet the skyrocketing demand, all while navigating an increasingly hostile and complex legal landscape. With this groundbreaking legislation, Maryland has the opportunity to take the bold and decisive action this moment requires and lead the nation by truly resourcing the support networks on which so many people and communities rely to get the abortions they want and need.

Abortion funds are at the forefront of abortion access in their communities. Even before the Supreme Court's decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* overturned *Roe v. Wade* and gutted the constitutional right to abortion, abortion funds were often the difference between someone getting an abortion or being forced to remain pregnant. The cost of abortion—which currently varies between \$560 and over \$20,000, depending on the circumstances—alone is prohibitive for many, and is frequently compounded by other systemic barriers due to economic inequality, racism, xenophobia, abortion stigma, and extreme and ungrounded abortion restrictions.¹ Federal lawmakers exacerbate the abortion access gap by prohibiting the use of federal funding for abortions, and only a few states have granted additional funds for this purpose

¹ See Ortal Wasser, et al., *Catastrophic Health Expenditures for In-State and Out-of-State Abortion Care*, JAMA NETWORK OPEN (Nov. 8, 2024), <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2826000>; Ivette Gomez, et al., *Abortions Later in Pregnancy in a Post-Dobbs Era*, KAISER FAMILY FOUND. (Feb. 21, 2024), <https://www.kff.org/womens-health-policy/issue-brief/abortions-later-in-pregnancy-in-a-post-dobbs-era/>.

(and none on this scale). That means the costs associated with getting an abortion are covered almost entirely by people seeking abortions and private dollars, usually from abortion funds. As the abortion access gap widens, abortion funds provide essential funding and logistical support to make the impossible possible for many people.

While abortion funds experienced a momentary spike in donations after the *Dobbs* decision, that temporary increase was eclipsed by surging demand and has dwindled since. Abortion funds reported a 39% increase in requests for help in the year after *Dobbs*, and some abortion funds reported a 200% increase in call volume. In that time, abortion funds across the country disbursed over \$36 million to pay for the cost of abortions and over \$10 million to pay for logistical support, like transportation, lodging, childcare, and more. Since then, the complexity and cost of supporting callers has only continued to increase. Last year, in 2024, abortion funds disbursed more than \$50 million to pay for the costs of abortions and over \$13 million to pay for logistical support.² Many abortion funds, like the Baltimore Abortion Fund in Maryland, are struggling to meet that staggering demand and have been forced to close their health lines early most months because they frequently exceed their monthly funding budget within the first few weeks of the month. The network of abortion funds, clinics, and providers in Maryland is straining under the weight of this demand, and the unmet need continues to grow. That means that truly resourcing this critical support network by passing S.B. 848 may very well be the difference between many Marylanders and others getting an abortion or being forced to remain pregnant.³

S.B. 848 would create a first-ever public health grant program funded by existing and unspent premiums for abortion coverage already set aside and required to be collected by the Affordable Care Act. An estimated \$25 million has accumulated from unspent premiums for abortion coverage in Maryland, and these surplus funds will likely continue to accrue at a rate of \$3 million a year. These funds, which must be used for abortions and would otherwise go unused, will be reinvested directly into abortion funds (and abortion clinics with in-house abortion funds) in Maryland. The grant funding from S.B. 848 would enable potential grant recipients like the Baltimore Abortion Fund to support **thousands** more people in paying for their abortions. We applaud supporters of S.B. 848 for recognizing that our communities are interconnected and enabling the use of grant funds for abortion seekers who are forced to travel to Maryland from restrictive states to get an abortion. And we appreciate that funding from S.B. 848 can be used to pay for an abortion regardless of whether someone has insurance, which is critical for abortion seekers who are uninsured, underinsured, or who are unable to or endangered if they use their own insurance. This unprecedented influx of state funding would be transformative for your communities and for people who travel to Maryland because they cannot get abortions where they work or live, particularly from Southern states with abortion bans or restrictions.

² Data on file with the National Network of Abortion Funds.

³ Studies show that denying someone an abortion has profound impacts on their lives and health that often persist for decades. They are more likely to experience health issues during pregnancy, which is already one of the most dangerous times in a person's life due to the maternal health crisis in this country. Denying an abortion to someone experiencing intimate partner violence harder for them to leave, and increases the odds that their abuser will severely harm or murder them. And people who are forced to remain pregnant are more likely to experience poverty and to struggle to cover basic living expenses like food, housing, and transportation for years afterward. See Diana Greene Foster, et. al, *The Turnaway Study*, ANSIRH (2025), <https://www.ansirh.org/research/ongoing/turnaway-study>.

S.B. 848 also recognizes the increased risks and threats of criminalization that so many abortion providers, abortion funds, other supporters, and people who get abortions are facing now. In this increasingly complex, constantly shifting, and hostile legal landscape, it is essential to protect the private information of people who get abortions or support others in getting abortions. NNAF appreciates that S.B. 848 prohibits the release, publication, or disclosure of any identifying information about staff at abortion funds, abortion providers, or people whose abortions are funded by S.B. 848.

Maryland has a long history of supporting access to abortion, and abortion is extremely popular among voters in Maryland. Just last year, Marylanders enshrined the right to abortion in the state constitution, a critical step toward ensuring Maryland is a safe haven for people seeking abortions. But a right in name is not enough. NNAF believes that all people should have access to the abortions they want and need when they want and need them, regardless of who they are, where they live, whether they are insured, or how much money they earn, and S.B. 848 is a bold and decisive step toward that reality.

We urge the Committee to return a favorable report on this groundbreaking and deeply impactful legislation, and to model for other states what leadership looks like in this moment. If the Committee has questions about this testimony, please contact Alanna Peterson, Chief Legal Officer, and MiQuel Davies, Associate General Counsel, at legal@abortionfunds.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Poonam Dreyfus-Pai', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Poonam Dreyfus-Pai
Interim Executive Director
National Network of Abortion Funds