



**Bill:** Senate Bill 848 Public Health Abortion Grant Program

**Sponsor:** Senator Guy Guzzone

**Hearing Date:** March 6, 2025

**Position:** SUPPORT

**Contact:** Ariana Kelly, Executive Director, 240/338-0591

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The Maryland Commission for Women strongly supports Senate Bill 848, which seeks to establish a special nonlapsing public grant fund utilizing existing resources to expand and sustain equitable access to abortion care across Maryland. Importantly, under federal law, these resources can only be utilized for the provision of abortion care.

Under the Affordable Care Act (ACA), the federal government requires insurance plans to collect \$1 per member per month for abortion services. This provision was developed during negotiations of the ACA and intended to stigmatize the provision of abortion care. This money must be held in a segregated account, where it has been accumulating and growing interest since 2014. The current balance is nearly \$20 million. An additional surplus of \$2.5 million is expected annually. This is because insurance coverage for abortion care does not cost anywhere near the \$1 per member per month required under federal law. SB848 puts these excess funds to use by establishing the *Public Health Abortion Grant Program*, rather than allowing them to just sit in the bank accounts of the health insurance carriers. The insurance carriers do not oppose this legislation, and no public funds are needed to establish this program.

Since 1968 the Maryland Commission for Women has strongly supported access to abortion care as essential to women's full participation in society. In 2024, Marylanders publicly affirmed their overwhelming support for abortion access with a 76% affirmative vote to enshrine reproductive freedom into the Maryland Constitution.

At the Commission for Women, we engage in outreach work across the state to identify issues impacting Maryland women. Maryland women have consistently expressed significant concern about securing abortion access in Maryland since the *Dobbs* decision overturned *Roe vs. Wade*. Since the *Dobbs* decision, charitable abortion funds and abortion care providers across the state have increasingly reported that demand for care is far outpacing the current available funding. The *Public Health Grant Program* is designed similarly to other existing public health grant programs to ensure the need in Maryland is met.

Senate Bill 848 represents an innovative, first-in-the-nation approach to ensuring abortion access. Importantly, this program uses existing resources. There is no new taxpayer money involved. By establishing this grant program, SB 848 will:

- Expand access to essential healthcare services, especially for uninsured individuals, individuals not covered by Maryland regulated plans, and individuals experiencing domestic violence who may not be able to use their insurance.
- Support providers in delivering safe, high-quality abortion care.
- Reduce financial obstacles that prevent individuals from accessing the care they need.
- Reinforce Maryland’s commitment to reproductive freedom amid increasing national restrictions on abortion rights.

SB 848 ensures that individuals seeking abortion care in Maryland can exercise their reproductive rights without unnecessary hardship. This is not just a matter of healthcare; it is a matter of dignity, bodily autonomy, and justice.

The commission thanks Senator Guzzone for introducing this legislation and respectfully urges the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 848 and stand with Marylanders in protecting and expanding access to reproductive healthcare. Maryland Commission for Women Executive Director Ariana Kelly is available to answer any further questions at [Ariana.Kelly@Maryland.Gov](mailto:Ariana.Kelly@Maryland.Gov)

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