

Date of Hearing: February 26, 2025, 1:00 PM
Linda Rae Bergofsky
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TESTIMONY ON HB0930 - POSITION: FAVORABLE
Public Health Abortion Grant Program – Establishment

TO: Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: Linda Bergofsky

I am a resident of District 15. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB0930, Public Health Abortion Grant Program - Establishment

By way of background, I am a member of Oseh Shalom synagogue in Laurel, MD and serve as the chair of its Social Justice committee. I am also a member of the National Council of Jewish Women and an advocate for preserving access to reproductive services for all Marylanders. I campaigned to successfully pass Question 1 in last year's election and now I am asking the Maryland General Assembly to take the next step and ensure that people can pay for abortion care, irrespective of income or insurance coverage.

Federal restrictions, such as the Hyde Amendment, have prohibited federal funding for abortion care. Unlike other health care services - family planning, breast and cervical cancer screening, prenatal services - there is no public grant funding for abortion care. As a result of Federal funding prohibitions, abortion care for low-income individuals has been marginalized with limited sources of funding. While eighteen states, including Maryland, use state funding for abortion coverage in Medicaid, non-profit abortion funds have been left to fill the gaps.

Through private donations, these funds support people who are uninsured or under insured, or have insurance but afraid to use it for confidentiality reasons, and to cover travel and wrap around services. Financial shortfalls are putting Maryland clinics at risk of closing. Partners in Care, an all trimester clinic that serves many out of state patients, is on the verge of closing. The Baltimore Abortion Fund, the largest in the state, can't keep its office open half the time due to lack of funds.

I am urging you to support HB0930 and help create the Public Health Abortion Grant Program to be administered by the MD Department of Health (MDH). Specifically, this program would be funded through the transfer of segregated funds from insurance carriers accounts (as specified in the ACA). The grant program will fund abortion care services for the uninsured and underinsured as well as individuals who have confidentiality concerns about an explanation of benefits being sent to the policy holder. MDH will award funds to non-profit abortion funds and providers only and must award grants using 90% of funds and only use 10% for costs. Program and participants would be prohibited from imposing restrictions inconsistent with law (e.g.

spousal consent). Privacy protections are included to protect personal information of grant administrators, providers and patients.

Maryland is a leader in protecting the rights of people to reproductive care. The Public Health Abortion Grant Fund is the necessary next step in ensuring people who need abortions get financial support. **I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB0930.**