

Written Testimony for **SB 848/HB 930**: Public Health Abortion Grant Program - Establishment - Please **VOTE NO** on this bill.

Dear Finance Committee:

This bill reads “(A) THERE IS A PUBLIC HEALTH ABORTION GRANT PROGRAM. (B) THE PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM IS TO PROVIDE GRANTS TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO ABORTION CARE CLINICAL SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS IN THE STATE. (C) (1) THE SECRETARY SHALL PROVIDE OPERATING GRANTS TO ELIGIBLE ORGANIZATIONS TO SUPPORT EQUITABLE ACCESS TO ABORTION CARE CLINICAL SERVICES ACROSS THE STATE. (2) GRANT FUNDS PROVIDED UNDER THE PROGRAM SHALL BE USED TO SUPPORT ABORTION CARE CLINICAL SERVICES FOR WHICH FEDERAL FUNDING IS PROHIBITED FOR INDIVIDUALS WITHOUT SUFFICIENT RESOURCES, INCLUDING TO COVER REASONABLE ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS OF MANAGING SERVICES PROVIDED UNDER THE GRANT...”

This is **not** a bill that should be about **public health**, but about private, individual health. There is no reason that tax paying Marylanders should have their taxes pay for a “Public Health Abortion Grant Program”. After all, it is the taxpayer who will be funding this “Public Health Abortion Grant Program”!! Insurance carriers should pay for and fund this Grant Program, as is stipulated in the bill. This is a health care issue, after all. However, having all Marylanders pay for or fund this Grant Program is ludicrous. If there are people in Maryland that want to contribute to this Grant Program voluntarily, that’s fine. But not every single taxpayer should pay for other people to choose to end the lives of unborn children. For people that do not believe in abortion, they should not have to pay!! This bill is asking all taxpayers to pay into a Grant Program that goes against some taxpayers’ religion and sincerely held, fundamental religious beliefs. In fact, this would violate the First Amendment’s Free Exercise clause. The First Amendment’s Free Exercise Clause limits the government’s involvement in religious matters. It protects the freedom to practice one’s religion, or no religion at all, without interference from the government. This clause upholds people’s right to hold whichever religious beliefs they choose. A religious belief need not adhere to the principles of Christianity or any particular faith. Indeed, the Courts have even noted that notions beyond traditional theism may be considered as part of the ever-broadening understanding of the modern religious community.

In 1971, the Courts established our current standard for determining whether government action complies with the First Amendment's Establishment Clause. In *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, the Court set forth what we now refer to as the three-pronged *Lemon* test. It requires the government action to:

- Serve a primarily secular purpose
- Not promote or hinder religion
- Not excessively entangle church and state

State action that fails to meet one or more of these criteria violates the Establishment Clause.

This bill violates the second "prong" *Lemon* test by "hindering" religion and sincerely held, fundamental religious beliefs.

By all means have insurance carriers pay for abortions or have the individuals wanting to end an unborn child's life pay for their own abortion. But to discriminate against someone's religion is illegal as shown above.

Therefore, you must **VOTE NO** on this bill to show Marylanders that you will not hinder their practice of their religion.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Trudy Tibbals