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BILL NO:	House Bill 1271
TITLE:	Health - Abortion - Ultrasound and Wait Time
COMMITTEE:	Health and Government Operations
HEARING DATE:	February 27, 2025
POSITION:	<b>OPPOSE</b>

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The Women's Law Center of Maryland is dedicated to ensuring the physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy of women throughout the state. We oppose House Bill 1271 and its tired, unnecessary interventions – including waiting periods and additional ultrasounds – abortion opponents continue to push to limit the legal, and in Maryland, constitutionally-protected right to reproductive freedom.

HB 1271 proposes a waiting period for abortion care of 24 hours for people who live 100 miles or less away or two hours for people living over 100 miles away. The bill would also mandate the healthcare provider to require their patients to verbally dissent from engaging with the visual and auditory outputs of their diagnostic ultrasound. Medical practitioners who violate the waiting period or ultrasound provision would be subject to a \$2,500 fine.

This legislation is designed to impede access to abortion care. Individuals seeking care would have to make multiple trips to obtain healthcare, placing a significant burden on people with limited income, time, or transportation options. The requirement accomplishes no clinical purpose and endangers individuals who need emergency care. Maryland law does not impose these requirements for any other type of care.

In addition to the proposed arbitrary waiting periods, the bill also requires that medical providers verbally “offer” additional imaging and auditory files of a patient’s diagnostic ultrasound. Abortion opponents believe the imaging and heartbeat tracks will be so emotionally distressing that a patient will end their request for abortion care. Not only is this paternalistic and infantilizing intervention by the state medically unnecessary, it is explicitly designed to traumatize patients seeking emergency healthcare.

Government control of reproductive capacity has long persisted as a tool to subordinate women, people of color, people living on lower incomes and other disfavored groups. HB 1271 would continue this legacy of disenfranchisement and disregard for the bodily autonomy of healthcare patients seeking abortion care in Maryland. We ask for an unfavorable report. This legislation is designed not to achieve any medical or clinical purpose; it is solely intended to marginalize abortion care and inflict trauma on people seeking to end their pregnancies.

*The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a non-profit legal services organization whose mission is to ensure the physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy of women in Maryland. Our mission is advanced through direct legal services, information and referral hotlines, and statewide advocacy.*