



BILL NO: House Bill 1186
TITLE: Criminal Law - Causing Ingestion of an Abortion-Inducing Drug - Prohibition (Women's Freedom From Coercion Act)
COMMITTEE: Judiciary
HEARING DATE: March 6, 2025
POSITION: **OPPOSE**

The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) is the state domestic violence coalition that brings together victim service providers, allied professionals and concerned individuals for the common purpose of reducing intimate partner and family violence and its harmful effects on our citizens. **MNADV urges the COMMITTEE to report unfavorably on HB 1186.**

House Bill 1186 would criminalize the act of knowingly and willfully causing a pregnant individual to ingest an abortion-inducing drug without consent, through fraud or coercion, or by force or threat of force. Certainly, the Network does not support coercion or force of any kind. However, we fear HB 1186's potential negative implications or unintended consequences. And we question the approach of creating a separate crime in this instance for acts that are most certainly chargeable under existing crimes.

One major concern is that HB 1186 could inadvertently limit access to medical abortion services. The bill's broad language may create an environment where healthcare providers fear legal repercussions, leading to hesitancy in prescribing abortion-inducing medications even when it is medically appropriate, consensual and legal. This is what is happening in states with restrictive abortion laws. This would result in reduced availability of abortion services, disproportionately affecting women who rely on medication-induced abortions as a safe and accessible option.

Additionally, the bill's emphasis on criminalization may deter women from seeking medical assistance in cases of complications arising from self-managed abortions. Fear of legal consequences could discourage individuals from disclosing pertinent information to healthcare providers, potentially leading to inadequate medical care and increased health risks. This punitive approach will disproportionately impact marginalized women, including those with limited access to healthcare resources or those living in areas with restrictive abortion laws.

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Furthermore, HB 1186's focus on criminal penalties, including imprisonment of up to 25 years, will not effectively address the root causes of coerced abortions. Resources would be better allocated toward comprehensive support services for pregnant individuals, such as counseling, financial assistance, and access to healthcare. By prioritizing criminalization over support, the bill fails to empower women to make autonomous decisions about their reproductive health.

For the above stated reasons, the **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence** urges an **unfavorable report on HB 1186**.

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