



Moms for Liberty Maryland Legislative Committee urges a favorable report for HB 1186 (cross filed with SB 0933): *Criminal Law - Causing Ingestion of an Abortion-Inducing Drug - Prohibition (Women's Freedom from Coercion Act.)*

Given Maryland's codification of Reproductive Freedom for all Marylanders into the State Constitution, which guarantees the right to reproductive freedom without age restrictions, HB 1186 raises important considerations regarding children's rights and parental rights.

House Bill 1186 will help protect parental rights by addressing and preventing coercion in reproductive decisions involving minors. While the bill itself does not directly mandate parental involvement or consent in a minor's reproductive health choices, it serves as a safeguard to ensure that parents' rights to protect their children from manipulation or coercion are respected.

We support HB 1186 as it will help protect parental rights and individual autonomy by:

1. Preventing Coercion and Abuse: HB 1186 criminalizes coercion, fraud, or force used to induce an individual to take an abortion-inducing drug. This means that if a minor is pressured or manipulated into seeking an abortion or taking an abortion pill against their will, parents can rely on this law to protect their children from such exploitation. It helps ensure that parents have legal recourse if they believe their child is being coerced into a decision they are not ready for, or if a third party is influencing their

child's reproductive choices in harmful ways. By preventing coercion, the bill effectively supports parental rights to protect their children from outside pressures, ensuring that decisions are made voluntarily and autonomously—free from manipulation.

2. Affirming Parents as Protectors of Their Children: While the Reproductive Freedom for All Marylanders constitutional amendment gives minors the right to make their own reproductive healthcare decisions, HB 1186 recognizes that parents are the primary protectors of their children's welfare. If a parent believes their child is being manipulated or forced into an abortion decision, they can point to this bill's penalties as a means of legal recourse to stop coercion. In this way, it reaffirms the idea that parents have a role in safeguarding their children's well-being, even in sensitive areas like reproductive health.

3. Strengthening Parental Control Over Unwanted Influence: In cases where minors may not have the full emotional maturity or understanding to make decisions about abortion, HB 1186 ensures that parents can take legal action against any outside party that tries to exert undue influence on their child. It essentially gives parents the legal tools to monitor and intervene in situations where their child might be at risk of making a decision under duress. This gives parents an additional layer of protection to prevent their minor child from facing abortion-inducing decisions under force or fraud.

4. Complementing Parental Guidance: While the bill does not require parental consent or notification for abortion services, it acts as a complementary safeguard for parents. It doesn't restrict a minor's right to access reproductive health care but ensures that the minor's right to make a free, informed decision is protected. Parents can rest assured knowing that if their child is in a situation of undue pressure, they can seek legal protections to stop the coercive influence. This supports a parent's responsibility to guide their child in making health decisions in a manner that is free from external manipulation, especially in cases where the child may be vulnerable.

5. Encouraging Informed Decision-Making: HB 1186 protects both the minor's autonomy and the parent's role as a protector, ensuring that reproductive decisions are made freely and are informed. If a minor is being forced into a decision, this law gives parents an additional avenue to

ensure that their children are not making life-altering decisions under pressure—which can sometimes happen in families where there is no communication or where parents may not be fully aware of the external influences affecting their child. This law aligns with the concept of parents playing an active role in their child’s health and well-being, ensuring that reproductive decisions are not only legally autonomous but also made in a safe, supportive environment.

In conclusion, HB 1186 protects parental rights by ensuring that parents can safeguard their children from coercion in reproductive decisions. While the law does not change the fact that minors have the constitutional right to make decisions about their reproductive health, it empowers parents to protect their children from manipulation or external pressures. It serves as an important tool for parents who want to be involved in making sure their child’s reproductive health choices are made freely and without undue influence, providing a safeguard that parents can rely on in case of coercion or force.

For all these reasons, Moms for Liberty Maryland Legislative Committee urges a favorable report for HB 1186.