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February 17, 2026

To: The Honorable Pamela Beidle, Chair
Finance Committee

From: Irnise F. Williams, Deputy Director, Health Education and Advocacy Unit

Re: Senate Bill 0563 - Health Facilities - Confidentiality of Medical Records - Crisis
Pregnancy Clinics – **SUPPORT IN CONCEPT**

The Office of the Attorney General’s Health Education and Advocacy Unit (HEAU) supports the intent of SB563. The bill seeks to expand Maryland’s Confidentiality of Medical Records Act by designating crisis pregnancy centers (CPCs)—including mobile facilities that are not HIPAA-covered entities—as “health care providers,” thereby subjecting them to the same confidentiality standards as licensed or authorized providers in the state.

CPCs are typically nonprofit organizations that present themselves as clinics but primarily offer counseling aimed at discouraging abortion. Most do not provide medical care, and their staff are generally not licensed healthcare professionals. Visitors often believe their records are protected under HIPAA and Maryland’s Medical Records Act, but in most cases, they are not.

While we strongly support protecting the privacy of individuals who seek services at CPCs, we have significant concerns about the bill’s approach. As drafted, SB563 adds CPCs to the list of facilities deemed health care providers without amending related definitions—such as “medical record” and “health care”—needed to ensure those protections apply. Granting CPCs the status of “health care providers” could mislead consumers and legitimize organizations that frequently disseminate medically inaccurate information and delay access to legitimate prenatal and abortion care.

Maryland’s current confidentiality law defines “medical records” as records related to “health care,” which means any care, treatment, or procedure by a health care provider to diagnose, evaluate, rehabilitate, manage, treat, or maintain the physical or mental condition of a patient or recipient, or that affects the body’s structure or function—services CPCs generally do not provide. Without clear definitions addressing CPC activities, the bill risks leaving sensitive information unprotected while inadvertently legitimizing non-medical organizations.

We fully support privacy protections for those seeking pregnancy-related guidance and care. We met with advocates on February 16, 2026, to discuss amendments to the bill that would:

- Ensure accurate definitions that protect confidentiality without mischaracterizing CPCs as health care providers;
- Avoid unintended consequences that legitimize non-medical organizations as healthcare providers; and
- Explore alternative approaches to strengthen privacy protections.

We look forward to working together to deliver the privacy protections intended by this bill. Thank you for considering these concerns as you review SB563.

cc: Senator Dawn Gile
Senator Katie Fry Hester
Senator Shelly Hettleman
Senator Clarence K. Lam