

March 1, 2026

Health Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
240 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**House Bill 1143 - Public Health - Office of the Chief Medical Examiner - Perinatal Autopsies
(Lung Float Test Ban)**

FAVORABLE

Dear Health Committee Members:

My name is Heather Reichardt. I am a citizen in Montgomery County and the President of AAUW Maryland (American Association of University Women). We urge you to support **HB 1143**, *Public Health - Office of the Chief Medical Examiner - Perinatal Autopsies (Lung Float Test Ban)*

Summary: The so-called “floating lung” or hydrostatic test has been used for decades in the United States and elsewhere as part of legal processes involving suspected infant or neonatal deaths. Per Physicians for Human Rights, “This test, however, has been deemed wholly unreliable by pathologists and forensic experts for decades and is therefore not accepted by the wider forensic pathology community as a credible or accurate test to distinguish between live versus stillbirth.” Nevertheless, despite its documented inaccuracy, the test is still being used and entered into, evidence by prosecutors...,” including in Maryland.

Protect Maryland women from indiscriminate legal jeopardy for having lost a child.

Given that Maryland has several major teaching hospitals and healthcare facilities, it is surprising that Maryland prosecutors and judges would rely on this outdated system of determining suspected infant or neonatal deaths. Based on its erroneous results, this test belongs in the Middle Ages, not the 21st century.

Again, per the Physicians for Human Rights report, “The inaccuracy of the test means that it is unethical to rely on its findings as the sole determinant of suspected neonatal death. Reliance on this inaccurate and outdated test would be particularly concerning given its potential use in litigation involving accusations of people having performed, or undergone, an abortion.”

By supporting HB 1143, you are protecting women from potentially inaccurate accusations regarding the end of their pregnancy. The Maryland health and judicial systems must move into the 21st century and empower doctors to properly identify the reasons for stillbirth.

We respectfully urge the Health Committee to give HB1143 full consideration and a favorable report. Thank you.

Sincerely,

AAUW MD
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