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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB1451**  
**Public Health – Women’s Health Care Data - Report**

At a time of soaring health care costs that impact patients, employers, and state budgets, forty-seven states voluntarily report key women’s health care data in a concerted effort to develop cost-containment strategies. HB1451 is the first step in data compilation to identify the cost drivers related to prenatal care, birth, postpartum care, abortion, menopausal care, and mental health services related to women’s health. By generating reliable and comprehensive spending data, policymakers are given the evidence-based information needed to make public health decisions.

HB1451 promotes fiscal transparency for public health purposes, limiting the data collection for analysis by policymakers. This bill does not authorize the disclosure of patient identifying information or provider-specific clinical records. Maryland’s Shield Laws that prohibit the disclosure of sensitive reproductive health information are not undermined in any way. HB1451 does not alter or override the patient’s constitutional right to reproductive freedom established in Maryland in November 2024. This bill establishes transparency and accountability in women’s health care, while protecting their privacy. HB1451 specifically states that entities reporting to the Maryland Department of Health shall “anonymize and de-identify patient data as necessary to comply with applicable laws.”

The collection of data pertaining to the Medicaid funding for abortions ensures accountability and compliance with state and federal regulations. This data is critical in determining the financial and societal impact of such procedures. Protected by federal

and state privacy laws, the collection of this data will not in any way restrict or deter access to these procedures.

The United States is the only first-world country with a consistently rising maternal mortality rate as recorded in the past two decades. HB1451 ensures privacy while prioritizing women's health. Data collection and analysis in women's maternal health care can reveal disparities in health care due to affordability, low-income populations, and women of color. Transparency through evidence-based data enables Maryland to address inequities and make cost-effective decisions in the expenditure of public funds through Medicaid. Cost analyses can illuminate the budgetary impact of preventable complications that went untreated during and after pregnancy.

Key Takeaways from HB1451:

Transparency Without Loss of Privacy Protections

Accountability Through Fiscal Data Collection

Promotion of Maternal and Child Health to Reduce the Rising Mortality Rate

Addressing Rising Health Care Costs Without Compromising Quality of Care

Identifying Disparities in Health Care for Women of Color and Low-Income Populations

Please return a favorable report for HB1451.

Thank you, Madame Chair and Committee Members.

*Susan K. McComas*