



**Mission:** *To improve public health in Maryland through education and advocacy* **Vision:** *Healthy Marylanders living in Healthy Communities*

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**Testimony In Opposition of HB 1281**  
**Health – Abortion – Ultrasound and Wait Time**  
**By: Maryland Public Health Association (MdpHA)**  
**March 19, 2026**

Chair Bagnall, Vice-Chair Cullison, and Members of the Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify against HB 1281 which would prohibit a qualified provider from performing or inducing an abortion on a pregnant person within 24 hours after receiving transabdominal ultrasound imaging unless they live 100 miles or more away.

Requiring physicians to perform ultrasounds for individuals who are seeking an abortion can increase the cost of the abortion<sup>1</sup> and mandatory waiting periods are both medically unnecessary and increase barriers to abortion care<sup>2</sup>. Specifically, the wait time requirement would create additional barriers for patients who must travel a distance (even under 100 miles), take additional time off from work, or arrange childcare.<sup>2</sup> These barriers would deepen existing healthcare access inequities. Evidence also shows that requiring ultrasounds do not significantly change patients' minds<sup>3,4</sup> and that the vast majority of individuals who seek an abortion do not regret their decision and remained certain of their decision five years later<sup>5</sup>. Additionally, research shows that the most common emotion patients felt five years after receiving their abortion was relief, not regret.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, voters passed Maryland Question 1 (SB798/HB705) in the November 2024 election which amends the constitution to establish the right to reproductive freedom and the right to make decisions to prevent, continue, or end one's own pregnancy<sup>6</sup>. This bill would create unnecessary costs and barriers and therefore does not appear to align with the amendment.

We strongly urge you to give an unfavorable report for HB 1281 and protect access to abortion services for all Marylanders.

*The Maryland Public Health Association (MdpHA) is a nonprofit, statewide organization of public health professionals dedicated to improving the lives of all Marylanders through education, advocacy, and collaboration. We support public policies consistent with our vision of healthy Marylanders living in healthy, equitable, communities. MdpHA is the state affiliate of the American Public Health Association, a nearly 145-year-old professional organization dedicated to improving population health and reducing the health disparities that plague our state and our nation.*

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<sup>1</sup> Guttmacher Institute. (2023). Requirements for Ultrasound. <https://www.guttmacher.org/state-policy/explore/requirements-ultrasound>

<sup>2</sup> Guttmacher Institute. (2025). Counseling and Waiting Period Requirement for Abortion. <https://www.guttmacher.org/state-policy/explore/counseling-and-waiting-periods-abortion>

<sup>3</sup> Jovel, I., Cartwright, A. F., Ralph, L., & Upadhyay, D. (2021). Abortion Waiting Periods and Decision Certainty Among People Searching Online for Abortion Care. *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, 137 (4): 597-605. DOI: 10.1097/AOG.00000000000004313

<sup>4</sup> Gatter, M., Kimport, K., Foster, D. G., Weitz, T. A., & Upadhyay, U. (2014). Relationship Between Ultrasound Viewing and Proceeding to Abortion. *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, 123 (1): 81-87. DOI: 10.1097/AOG.0000000000000053

<sup>5</sup> Rocca, C. H., Samari, G., Foster, D. G., Gould, H., & Kimport, K. (2020). Emotions and decision rightness over five years following an abortion: An examination of decision difficulty and abortion stigma. *Soc Sci Med.*, 248:112704. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2019.112704.

<sup>6</sup> S.B. 798/CH244, 2023 General Assembly of Maryland, 2023 Reg. Sess. (Maryland, 2023).

<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2023RS/bills/sb/sb0798T.pdf>

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