

City of Baltimore

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Councilwoman Phylicia R. L. Porter, District 10

CHAIR: Public Health and Environment

MEMBER:

Labor and Workforce

Public Safety

Transportation and Land Use

February 26, 2026

Bill Title: HB1143: Public Health - Office of the Chief Medical Examiner - Perinatal Autopsies (Lung Float Test Ban)

Position: Favorable

To: Chair Bagnall, Vice Chair Cullison, Health Committee

Dear Chair Bagnall and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB1143, prohibiting the use of the hydrostatic lung test (HT), commonly known as the lung float test in perinatal autopsies to determine whether a newborn ever breathed. Due to the unreliability, weaponization, and historical inaccuracies proven in studies conducted by the wider forensic pathology community, this bill seeks to remove lung float tests from the normal standards of medical practice legally conducted in the state of Maryland. This ban not only helps decriminalize women who experience obstetric emergencies, but it promotes strategic goals for advancing accuracy and health equity in our state.

The death of a child, whether during pregnancy or shortly after, is one of the most devastating moments a parent can endure. In those moments, families deserve compassion, clarity and confidence that the systems responding to them are grounded in modern, reliable practices. Yet, the lung float test, an outdated method, has raised serious concerns about its reliability, especially in high-stakes situations where legal consequences may follow. At the local level, my office launched the Black Maternal Health agenda, to fight for the care, dignity, and justice Black moms deserve. HB1143 strengthens this by reinforcing scientific integrity, maternal justice, and reliable forensic practices.

Across the country, we have seen how conclusions drawn from discredited techniques have led to harmful assumptions and unjust outcomes, especially for vulnerable mothers. HB1143 recognizes that Maryland must move forward with practices that reflect both scientific advancement and a commitment to maternal justice. By modernizing Maryland's forensic standards, it provides an accountability mechanism, strengthens public trust, and protects grieving families from preventable harm.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Phylicia R. L. Porter". The signature is stylized with a large, flowing "P" and "R".

Councilwoman Phylicia Porter, MPH, MSL

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Chair, Public Health and Environment Committee

Baltimore City Council - District 10