



## Favorable Statement

**HB1401**

**Public Health - Abortion - Informed Consent**

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On behalf of our chapter members across the state, we respectfully ask you to issue a favorable report to HB1401. Because abortion is an irreversible medical procedure with significant physical, emotional, and social implications, the standards for consent should be high. This is a common sense bill that the Maryland General Assembly must enact in order to give Maryland women an informed CHOICE about abortion.

This bill is pro-woman legislation that trusts and empowers women to make difficult choices about their pregnancies and their lives. Informed consent legislation is not an attack on personal freedom, but a *guarantee* of it. It is a reasoned and compassionate response to the needs of concerned pregnant women.

**We request your favorable report for the following reasons:**

### **1. Upholding Patient Autonomy and Self-Determination**

A patient cannot truly be autonomous unless they possess all relevant facts. It is intellectually dishonest to say you are "pro-choice" but then refuse to guarantee the women of Maryland the fundamental information they need to make an informed choice about their *growing child* and reproductive health. Women also need information and access to abortion alternatives and resources available to them if they choose life for their child.

- **Meaningful Choice:** A choice made in ignorance or under pressure is not a "free" choice. Providing detailed information about the procedure, risks, and

alternatives ensures the woman is the primary architect of her medical journey.

- **Parity with Other Surgeries:** In almost any other major surgical or life-altering medical procedure, patients are required to review detailed risk profiles. Abortion should not be an exception to these standard medical ethics.

## 2. Psychological Well-being and Regret Prevention

Many women who undergo abortions face years of psychological pain and turmoil. Psychologists have coined the term “Post-Abortion Syndrome (PAS)” to describe common symptoms that they have found in many post-abortive women who have come to them for help. Common symptoms of PAS include guilt, anxiety, depression, thoughts of suicide, drug or alcohol abuse, eating disorders, a desire to avoid children or pregnant women, and flashbacks to the abortion itself.

- **Reducing "Information Gap" Regret:** Post-procedural distress is often linked to a feeling of being "rushed" or "uninformed." By requiring a reflection period (waiting periods) and the provision of specific data, proponents aim to minimize the risk of "decisional regret."
- **Full Disclosure of Development:** Laws that require a woman to be informed about fetal development before abortion ensures the woman understands the nature of the life being terminated, which is essential for a fully informed moral and personal decision.

## 3. The State's Interest in Protecting Potential Life

From a legal and philosophical standpoint, the state has a legitimate interest in protecting preborn human life. Informed consent laws serve this interest by:

- **Encouraging Alternatives:** Requirements often include informing the woman about adoption services, financial assistance, and paternal child support.

- **Recognizing the Humanity of the Fetal Child:** Biologists agree that human Life begins at the moment of conception. The State should require abortion providers to provide the woman with the most comprehensive biological information possible—such as fetal heartbeat or ultrasound images—to ensure the gravity of the decision is fully understood.

#### 4. Protection Against Coercion

Informed consent protocols often involve private screening and consultation between provider and patient which assist in these ways:

- **Identifying Domestic Abuse:** They provide a structured opportunity for providers to ensure the woman is not being coerced by a partner or family member into a procedure she does not want. Nearly 3 in 4 women say they felt pressured into their abortion.
- **Ensuring Mental Capacity:** The process allows for an assessment of whether the patient is in a clear state of mind to make a significant medical decision.

The health risks of abortion undermine the false narrative promoted by the abortion industry, namely that the abortion debate requires *choosing sides* between mothers and their unborn children. The truth is that regulating abortion benefits *both* mothers *and* children – even their children in future pregnancies.

Evangeline Bartz of Americans United for Life put it best when she said: “*Women have been **betrayed** by an abortion industry that puts its profits above the health and safety of women.*”

**For these reasons, we ask you to put patients over profits and urge you to issue a favorable report for HB 1401. Thank you for your consideration.**