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Executive Nominations Committee

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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The Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

SB 302 - Criminal Law - Causing Ingestion of an Abortion-Inducing Drug -  
Prohibition (Women's Freedom From Coercion Act)

Statement of Support by Bill Sponsor Senator Mary Beth Carozza

Thank you Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the distinguished Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee for this opportunity to present Senate Bill 302 – Criminal Law – Causing Ingestion of an Abortion-Inducing Drug – Prohibition, as amended, known as the Women’s Freedom from Coercion Act.

SB 302 would prohibit a person from knowingly and willfully causing another to ingest, without their consent, an abortion-inducing drug through fraud, coercion, force, or the threat of force when the person knows or believes that the other person is pregnant. This legislation recognizes non-consensual or forced ingestion of an abortion-inducing drug is a crime with penalties. A violator is guilty of a felony and on conviction is subject to a discretionary sentence of the judge which could include imprisonment of not more than 10 years.

I want to be clear: this legislation does **not** restrict a woman from having an abortion. SB 302 is narrowly tailored to specifically address an issue on the rise in the United States: the non-consensual ingestion of abortion-inducing drugs. My testimony includes examples of known victims of coercive abortion highlighting the need to prohibit the forced ingestion of an abortion-inducing drug. This action should be a specifically defined crime with penalties to protect women.

Some of you may remember Senate Bill 561 of 2019, known as Laura and Reid’s Law. Laura Wallen from Olney, Maryland was four months pregnant when she was killed in September 2017 and her boyfriend was charged with the crime, but he died in his jail cell before the trial began. Laura was killed by her boyfriend because she was pregnant, and she had planned to keep the pregnancy. She had given her future child the name Reid.

Laura and Reid’s Law prohibits a person from committing a crime of violence against a woman when the perpetrator knows or believes that the other person is pregnant. Violators are guilty of a felony with a jail sentence of up to 10 years in addition to any other penalty imposed for the crime of violence. The reason I am bringing attention to SB 561 of 2019 is to highlight that SB 302 of 2026 serves a similar purpose. Forcing a pregnant woman to ingest abortion-inducing drugs is an act of domestic violence and is a crime.

In 2019, we learned that nationally, one in ten pregnant women will experience physical abuse at the hands of an intimate partner, and pregnancy-associated homicide in Maryland is 10 times the national average. The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence reported 237 fatalities due to domestic violence between 2019 and 2023. Over 1 in 3 women (35.6%) and 1 in 4 men (28.5%) in the United States have experienced some form of domestic violence in their lifetime.

Abusive individuals believe they have the right to control and restrict their partner's lives. Forcing a woman to end her pregnancy through fraud, coercion, force, or the threat of force is a form of domestic violence that eliminates her bodily autonomy and her choice.

The number of yearly abortions in the U.S. rose by 10 percent between 2020 and 2023, and the most common form is abortion-inducing drugs at 64 percent. This does not include abortions that take place within the home. In Maryland, you can have abortion pills mailed to you if you meet certain requirements, such as having a Maryland address. And while there is no specific information about the number of miscarriages in Maryland, roughly 15-20 percent of pregnancies in the United States end in miscarriage, making it the most common complication.

If someone were motivated to force a woman to ingest abortion-inducing drugs without her consent, they would have the means and opportunity, and they also would have an alibi by claiming the abortion was just a miscarriage, a naturally occurring phenomenon.

Now imagine that you wanted and planned to bring the pregnancy to term, but you thought your own body failed you, resulting in a miscarriage. Imagine the emotional pain and heartbreak you would experience, only to learn that someone took advantage of your trust and poisoned you, ignoring your choice and your bodily autonomy.

With access to abortion expanded in Maryland especially through telehealth and the ready access to abortion drugs, we can expect the number of abortions to increase statewide and along with it, the increase of coercive and criminal misuse of these abortion drugs. We do not know the exact numbers as Maryland is one of only three states that does not compile nor collect women's health care data, including birth, postpartum care, pregnancy care, and abortion data.

Chemical abortion is increasingly marketed as safe, routine, and empowering. But unlike surgical procedures performed in clinical settings, abortion pills can be obtained and administered in isolation – making them a tool not only for self-harm, but for exploitation by third parties.

We should be concerned that women who are the victims of coercion, are being denied informed consent about drugs that could result in their injury or death. Independent research released in 2025 by the Ethics and Public Policy Center (EPPC) demonstrates that complications from the abortion drug mifepristone occur at far higher rates than typically reported. This analysis of over 865,000 insurance claims found serious adverse events – hemorrhage, infection, failed abortions, and surgical follow-up – occurred in about 11 percent of women, a figure supported by international studies.

We also should be concerned that 44 percent of abortions nationally are performed on African-American women despite only accounting for 13 percent of the female population. As a State

with a prominent African-American population, we can assume that the Maryland percentage would be much higher.

I have amended this legislation to reflect the length of the jail sentence established by Laura and Reid's law. Under this legislation, upon conviction of the crime of non-consensual ingestion of an abortion-inducing drug the person could be subject to imprisonment not exceeding 10 years (as opposed to 25 years as originally introduced).

I believe this new crime and penalty is absolutely necessary for the protection and respect for the autonomy of women experiencing pregnancy in Maryland. The recent deregulation of chemical abortion drugs by the Food and Drug Administration has set up a new crime of opportunity. Until very recently, there were Remediation Standards requiring that a woman receive a doctor's examination before getting prescribed chemical abortion pills. Teleabortion changed that and now women (AND OTHERS) can easily order and purchase these potentially lethal drugs ONLINE without ever seeing a doctor. This creates a perfect opportunity for fraud and coercion. So a new crime calls for new penalties.

I also want to be clear that SB 302 would be complaint driven – meaning the woman herself would have to file charges against a person under this new crime. This Committee hears bills on a regular basis that creates a specific crime. In this case, that is justified and even necessary due to recent FDA deregulation and increased online sales of abortion drugs.

While Maryland was the first to introduce this legislation in 2025, Louisiana and Arkansas have already passed this important legislation to protect a woman's choice when it comes to pregnancy, and other states have brought this bill for consideration. These states now are holding the abusers and perpetrators of domestic violence accountable. That is the intention of SB 302, not to go after the victim, not to go after the providers of abortion, but for Maryland to hold the abusers and perpetrators of domestic violence accountable for the crime of a forced abortion.

In summary, Senate Bill 302 prohibits a person from knowingly and willfully causing another to ingest an abortion-inducing drug when the person knows or believes that the other person is pregnant and without consent, through fraud or coercion, or through force or threat of force. A person who violates a woman in this manner would be subject to a felony charge and a discretionary sentence of the judge which could include imprisonment of not more than 10 years. I look forward to working with this Committee on this legislation to protect women from being victims of this crime of non-consensual ingestion of abortion-inducing drugs.

Thank you for your kind attention and consideration, and I request the Committee grant a favorable report to SB 302.