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WOMEN LEGISLATORS OF MARYLAND
THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, February 25, 2026

To: Delegate, J. Sandy Bartlett, Chair

Delegate, Debra Davis, Vice Chair

Judiciary Committee

The Maryland Women's Caucus proudly supports HB 1131 – Public Health – Pregnancy Loss – Prohibited Actions – Pregnancy Outcome Protection Act.

HB 1131 provides critical protections for women experiencing pregnancy loss by preventing intrusive and unwarranted criminal investigations. The bill makes clear that pregnancy loss alone does not constitute probable cause for a search warrant or criminal inquiry. It defines pregnancy loss as the unintentional death of a fetus or embryo during pregnancy or labor, while preserving an exception where there is concrete evidence of criminal conduct. In doing so, the legislation balances the protection of women's rights with the appropriate administration of justice.

Too often, women who experience miscarriage or other pregnancy loss—events that are frequently beyond their control—face fear, scrutiny, and uncertainty at an already devastating moment. The possibility of legal investigation can deter women from seeking necessary medical care, placing their health and safety at greater risk.

Maternal health disparities in the United States remain severe, with disproportionately high mortality rates among African American and American Indian women. These disparities are driven by systemic inequities in healthcare access, quality, and trust. When women fear criminalization for pregnancy outcomes outside their control, those inequities deepen, further discouraging timely medical care and worsening health outcomes.

HB 1131 establishes clear legal protections to ensure that women are not unjustly targeted during moments of profound vulnerability. By removing fear of baseless investigation, the bill promotes access to medical care, strengthens trust between patients and providers, and reinforces a compassionate and equitable public health framework.

For these reasons, the Maryland Women's Caucus respectfully urges a favorable report on HB 1131.