



HB0056 Maryland Healthy Working Families Act – Employers with On-Site Health Clinics - Exemption

Presented to Hon. Dereck Davis and members of the House Economic Matters Committee

January 24, 2019 1:00 p.m.

POSITION: OPPOSE

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland **urges the Economic Matters Committee an unfavorable report on HB0056– Maryland Healthy Working Families Act – Employers with On-Site Health Clinics – Exemption**, sponsored by Delegate William Wivell. Earned sick and safe leave is a reproductive justice issue. **All working Marylanders deserve these rights.**

Sick leave is essential to ensure equal access to healthcare. The inability to earn sick time has a particular impact on women, who often take on the majority of responsibility for caring for children, disabled relatives, and ailing older family members, and who make up almost two thirds of minimum wage workers. Marylanders should be able to parent with dignity and not be penalized at work for being care givers. Primarily impacting low-income workers and people of color, *access to sick leave* is a privilege that shouldn't be a privilege — *it should be a right.*

For workers who need reproductive healthcare, time is precious. Lack of earned sick leave can influence pregnancy-decision making. Fear of losing one's pay or job contributes to delays or the inability to confirm a pregnancy, receive prenatal care, or terminate a pregnancy. Employees can face professional difficulties when needing time off to take care of their bodies, access preventative care, or address pressing sexual and reproductive health issues. Patients seeking prenatal care need one appointment per month until the 28th week, at which point medical providers insist on more frequency, particularly for patients carrying high-risk pregnancies. For those seeking reproductive technology, timely appointments must be kept to realize goals of family formation, especially among members of the LGBTQ community. Giving birth becomes a stressful life event for those missing pay necessary to cover basic needs such as housing and food. Time off to recover from a miscarriage should not result in financial jeopardy or job insecurity. Victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, and/or stalking should not be placed in further crisis by having to choose between timely healthcare or intervention and loss in pay or job. *Access to safe leave should be also be a right for every Marylander.*

Earned sick and safe leave upholds reproductive justice and gender equity for these workers. Granting an exemption to employers with on-site health clinics would take them out of the oversight and enforcement of the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation. In short, there would be no manner by which to ensure that workers at these job sites have the same, fair chance to earn and use sick and safe leave.

We severely doubt that the on-site health clinics at workplaces offer the full range of sexual and reproductive health care that everyday people need to address timely sexual health issues, engage in family planning, and obtain prenatal care and testing necessary toward healthy pregnancy outcomes. We would be surprised to know if any of them have ultrasound equipment on site.

The timely enforcement of the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act ensures that workers do not have to choose between positive health or safety outcomes against economic stability. **Therefore, we urge opposition to this exemption of the act and an unfavorable report on HB0056.** Thank you for your time and consideration.