



HB0145 Hospitals – Patient's Bill of Rights

To the Hon. Delegate Shane Pendergrass and Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee
February 6, 2019 at 1:00 p.m.

POSITION: SUPPORT

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland **urges the House Health and Government Operations Committee a favorable report for HB0145, Hospitals – Patient's Bill of Rights**, sponsored by Delegate Karen Lewis Young.

Our organization is an advocate for reproductive health, rights, and justice. Among our goals is to ensure autonomy and freedom in health care for all people. Medical providers have a duty to administer care that prioritizes the needs and wishes of their patients and does not infringe on their liberties. This bill establishes many critical rights that patients have, and it is important for patients to be aware of those rights.

HB0145 codifies that all patients deserve to be treated in a way that is ethical and humane, and provides them with the dignity, respect, and compassion they deserve. Further, these rights ensure that informing patients of their rights and other aspects of their healthcare must be done in a manner the patient can understand, increasing accessibility for non-English speakers as well as anyone with a visual, speech, or hearing impairment. Whether patients are seeking reproductive healthcare or any other form of care, it is important that they are aware of what they should expect from a healthcare provider.

Significantly, among the rights included in HB0145 is the right to informed decision-making or informed consent. This term describes the ability to understand all the medical options available, as well as all the associated risks and benefits. For patients making decisions on preventative care or birth control, involving them in their healthcare decisions allows them the chance to choose what is best for their circumstances and everyday lives. In our nation's history, there have been unfortunate incidents in which women have been subjected to reproductive coercion, from forced sterilization to C-sections, or denied the right to choose abortion care or medical care that would prioritize their health over a developing fetus. While healthcare providers are experts in the medical field, patients are experts on their own bodies and willingness to take risks, making them important sources of information in the healthcare decision-making process. By making our healthcare more patient-centered, we can expect patients to be more satisfied with the quality of care they receive. Providers' personal values-based opinions should not be made relevant to patients' experience of care, which is why it is imperative to provide maximum information during the care process, so that patients can make those decisions using their own autonomy.

In sum, HB0145 will help improve family planning and healthy pregnancy outcomes. Noting the low fiscal note, this appears to be a reasonable investment in supporting more Marylanders as they experience the serious and important medical life event of pregnancy. For these reasons, NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland **urges a favorable report for HB0145**. Thank you for your time and consideration.