



HB0630 - Health - Abortions - Reporting Requirements

Presented to Hon. Shane E. Pendergrass and
Members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee
March 8, 2019 1:00 p.m.

POSITION: OPPOSE

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland **urges the Health and Government Operations Committee for an unfavorable report on HB0630 - Health - Abortions - Reporting Requirements**, sponsored by Delegate William Wivell.

Our organization is an advocate for reproductive health, rights, and justice. We strive to ensure every individual has the freedom to decide if, when, and how to form one's family, and when parenting, to do so in safety, in good health, and in dignity. We recognize that each pregnancy is unique and honor pregnancy in all its complexity. Abortion access is an essential part of the ability to make reproductive healthcare decisions and a basic human right affirmed by the *Roe v. Wade* ruling in 1973 which was also codified in our state by a 1992 ballot referendum. In order to ensure each individual has fair and confidential access to abortion care, it is vital that the state oppose bills like HB0630 - legislation which aims to violate confidentiality, stigmatize patients, and burden abortion care providers.

Reporting requirements may be beneficial for understanding public health issues and how they are addressed; however, abortion care reporting must have safeguards to protect the right to privacy of patients as well as medical providers. HB0630 requires that extensive demographic data about the patient – state and county of residence; age, race, and marital status; estimated gestation; month abortion is performed; method of abortion care; and primary reason for seeking such care – to be collected by physicians, hospitals, or facilities providing abortion care. Patients seeking services that are asked this information may fear of being identified by community members or being judged for why they sought abortion care. Mandating disciplinary action against physicians for not making the reports is a tactic to scare local practitioners from offering the full range of reproductive healthcare for the families they serve as failure to comply can be publicly sensationalized. With the current national negative rhetoric fueled by anti-choice activists promoting misinformation about abortion care and calling for the criminalization of patients and providers, mandating reporting of this nature risks a chilling effect among patients hesitate to seek care as well as reduce access to care by providers with safety concerns in the communities in which they practice. Just last month, a family planning clinic was vandalized by arson in Columbia, Missouri – an example of how attacking the right to reproductive healthcare remains a huge issue in our country. According to the National Abortion Federation, which tracks violence against abortion care providers, there has been an increase since 2017 in threatening and violent incidents that have ranged from criminal trespass to the first attempted clinic bombing in years.

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland opposes harmful abortion-coverage restrictions, which seek to segregate and stigmatize abortion care from other necessary healthcare services, run counter to the purpose of offering comprehensive reproductive healthcare across the lifespan, and put women's health and privacy in jeopardy. Marylanders should not be afraid to seek basic reproductive healthcare services or have their personal safety jeopardized due to reporting requirements. **For these reasons, NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges an unfavorable report on HB0630.** Thank you for your time and consideration.