



HB0523 State Personnel – Employee Accommodations – Pregnancy and Childbirth
Presented to the Honorable Maggie McIntosh and Members of the House Appropriations Committee
February 11, 2020 1:00 p.m.

POSITION: SUPPORT

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges the House Appropriations Committee to **issue a favorable report on HB0523 State Personnel - Employee Accommodations - Pregnancy and Childbirth**, sponsored by Delegate Kriselda Valderrama.

Our organization is an advocate for reproductive health, rights, and justice. Protecting pregnant individuals from workplace discrimination is an essential component of reproductive freedom. We believe that everyone should have the ability to maintain healthy pregnancies by having reasonable accommodations when and where needed, not be unfairly pushed into paid or unpaid leave due to pregnancy or childbirth, and not be forced to accept a change in the workplace that is unnecessary for the employee to continue one's essential job duties. Economic security is essential to parenting with dignity, in good health, and safety. No pregnant employee should be forced to choose between keeping one's job over having a health pregnancy.

In the United States, over 40% of mothers are the sole or primary breadwinners for their family, with an additional 23.2% of mothers acting as "co-breadwinners" who bring in at least 25% of their total household income.¹ In order to advance the overall rights of pregnant and newly parenting workers in our state, HB0523 seeks to establish that state employers are required to grant requests for reasonable accommodations by employees seeking to maintain healthy pregnancies or positive postpartum health. While most pregnant individuals will continue working throughout their pregnancies without incident, some may require temporary adjustments to avoid pregnancy complications and safely work. Reasonable accommodations could include the ability to take more frequent bathroom breaks, access drinking water, or sit instead of stand during a long shift. While most employers could easily provide these accommodations, too many pregnant individuals who make such requests are met with opposition. In some cases, expecting mothers have been fired or forced into another position with lower compensation, passed over for advancement, or denied professional development opportunities. HB0523 prohibits state employers from forcing expectant mothers to agree to certain work conditions—such as unnecessarily depleting their limited paid or unpaid leave time that they will desperately need after childbirth. Additionally, many pregnant breadwinners who do not receive such accommodations will likely have no choice except to continue working in order to support their families, putting their once healthy pregnancies at risk. This legislation recognizes that pregnancy and childbirth are medical events that may require adjustments to address temporary limitations – not events that end the continuation of one's employment or career track.

HB0523 will ensure that state employees who are pregnant or newly parenting will gain support needed to successfully navigate the complex challenges of building and supporting their families. We hope that passage of this legislation will serve as another step towards guaranteeing that all pregnant and newly parenting workers in our state will have the same rights one day. Therefore, **NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges a favorable report on HB0523**. Thank you for your time and consideration.

¹ Glynn, Sarah Jane, "Breadwinning Mothers Continue to be the U.S. Norm," Center for American Progress, May 10, 2019, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2019/05/10/469739/breadwinning-mothers-continue-u-s-norm/>.