



SB0334 - Water Pollution Control - Intervention in Civil Action - Rights and Authority

Presented to the Hon. Will Smith and the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

January 26, 2021 at 1:00 p.m.

POSITION: SUPPORT

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to issue **a favorable report on, SB0334 - Water Pollution Control - Intervention in Civil Action - Rights and Authority** sponsored by Senator Jill Carter.

Our organization is an advocate for reproductive health, rights, and justice. Environmental pollutants, including water and soil pollution, are increasingly recognized as contributors to negative sexual and reproductive health outcomes. Communities of color and socioeconomically disadvantaged peoples are exposed to toxic water pollutants at a disproportionate rate, making water pollution control a critical [environmental justice](#) and reproductive justice issue.

Some reproductive health outcomes associated with water pollution include infertility, abnormal menstruation, and abnormal puberty; the effects of water pollution on pregnant individuals can include endometriosis, recurrent pregnancy loss, and polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS); impacts on the fetus include fetal death, prenatal growth abnormalities, reduced gestational period, and low birth weight. Furthermore, toxic chemicals can enter breastmilk after delivery.¹ The recent case of lead contamination in Flint, Michigan's water supply exemplifies these issues, where the community saw a 12% decrease in fertility rates and overall health at birth was diminished following the water contamination.² These health outcomes can cause enduring mental and physical trauma to pregnant persons and the infants they deliver. Substantial research has shown that low birth weight infants may be more at risk for many health problems; some may become sick in the first six days of life or develop infections, others can suffer from long term problems such as delayed motor skills and social development or learning disabilities.³

This bill gives individuals impacted by water and soil pollution the right to seek justice in civil court. Water pollution impacts marginalized groups most and reinforces the cycle of poverty; it is essential people have the right to seek reparations for any harm caused and enduring effects. Clean water and a safe environment are human rights, and the intergenerational damage caused by water pollution is reduced when justice is sought and served. For these reasons, NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland **urges a favorable committee report on SB0334**. Thank you for your time and consideration.

¹ Rashtian, J., Chavkin, D.E. & Merhi, Z. (2019) Water and soil pollution as determinant of water and food quality/contamination and its impact on female fertility. *Reproductive Biology & Endocrinology* 17, 5. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12958-018-0448-5>

² Grossman, D. & Slusky, D. (2019). The Impact of the Flint Water Crisis on Fertility. *Demography*, 56(6):2005-2031. doi: 10.1007/s13524-019-00831-0. PMID: 31808102.

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Reproductive and Birth Outcomes and the Environment. Retrieved <https://ephtracking.cdc.gov/showRbBirthOutcomeEnv>