



## HB1069 - Water Supply - Private Well Safety Program

Presented to the Hon. Kumar Barve and Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee  
February 24, 2021 1:30 p.m.

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### POSITION: SUPPORT

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges the House Environment and Transportation Committee **a favorable report on HB1069 - Water Supply - Private Well Safety Program**, sponsored by Delegate Vaughn Stewart.

Our organization is an advocate for reproductive health, rights, and justice. As part of our efforts to protect reproductive freedom for all Marylanders, we work to ensure every individual has the right to decide if, when, and how to form their families, and to parent in good health, in safety, and with dignity. In doing so, we support additional funding to increase well water quality testing and well remediation. Exposure to contaminants in private wells can result in serious adverse reproductive and sexual health outcomes, and are especially dangerous for [pregnant people, children, and HIV+ folks](#).

About [33.3%](#) of Maryland's population uses private wells for drinking water and many of these wells are able to be used without following federal standards. Well contamination can vary highly in different areas, and it can change over time from pollution sources such as agricultural runoff, sewage leaks, and chemical spills. Communities of color are disproportionately impacted by water contamination<sup>1</sup> and people of color often face worse pregnancy outcomes and adverse [reproductive health consequences](#) than their white counterparts. Some of the 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.<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, [nitrate](#) is a common contaminant found in well water which can cause methemoglobinemia in pregnant people and "Blue Baby Syndrome" in infants.

For these reasons, accessible clean drinking water is a reproductive justice issue. Additional funding is needed for surveillance of private well water quality and to ensure private wells are meeting federal water safety standards. NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland **urges a favorable committee report on HB1069**. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> McDonald, Y.J. & Jones, N.E., "Drinking Water Violations and Environmental Justice in the United States, 2011–2015," *American Journal of Public Health* 108, 10 (2018): pgs. 1401-1407. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2018.304621>

<sup>2</sup> Rashtian, J., et al., "Water and soil pollution as determinant of water and food quality/contamination and its impact on female fertility," *Reproductive Biology & Endocrinology* 17, 5: (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12958-018-0448-5>

<sup>3</sup> Grossman, D. & Slusky, D., "The Impact of the Flint Water Crisis on Fertility," *Demography*, 56, 6 (2019): 2005-2031. doi: 10.1007/s13524-019-00831-0. PMID: 31808102.

<sup>4</sup> "Reproductive and Birth Outcomes and the Environment," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, page last updated November 08, 2017, <https://ephtracking.cdc.gov/showRbBirthOutcomeEnv>