



**MDRTL State Legislative Advocacy
2021 Maryland General Assembly
“Legislative Wrap-Up”**

Maryland Right to Life (MDRTL) has been the leading voice on pro-life policy in Maryland for nearly 50 years. We mobilize public policy campaigns and lobby on behalf of those whose lives are threatened and cannot defend themselves.

With the help of our supporters and volunteers throughout the state, MDRTL has successfully defended against 30 legislative threats to life, provided testimony on 60 bills and sent over 17,000 constituent letters supporting life during the 2021 state legislative session.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS - On April 12, 2021 the 441st session of the Maryland General Assembly came to a close. The session posed particular challenges to freedom of speech and public participation because of Covid-19 virus related restrictions. In all, lawmakers introduced 2,362 bills and resolutions.

Through the proven strength of the organization, MDRTL was able to effectively discourage legislative support for the reintroduction of the Physician Assisted Suicide bill or the introduction of any abortion amendments to the Constitution of the State of Maryland in 2021.

MDRTL’s dedicated lobbyist provided testimony against 53 bills that posed a threat to life. Of those bills, MDRTL was successful in helping to defeat 30 problem bills.

MDRTL also was successful in soliciting a sponsor for the introduction of two pro-life bills, the *Abortion-Inducing Drug Risk Protocol Act* and the *Nondiscrimination in Health Care Coverage Act*. MDRTL supported the bill process from start to finish, recruiting and coordinating panels of expert witnesses from leading organizations including the **American Center for Law and Justice, Americans United for Life, the American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists, the Discovery Institute’s Center on Human Exceptionalism and the Maryland Coalition of Medical Pregnancy Clinics.**

While leading legislators introduced 9 pro-life bills this session, pro-life voters have been systematically denied due process by the Maryland House of Delegates, with several pro-life bills again denied a vote in the House Health and Government Operations Committee, chaired by Delegate Shane Pendergrass (D-Howard County). As a result, pro-life citizens are being denied representation, as state lawmakers continue to evade voting and a legislative record on pro-life legislation. MDRTL will be engaging in development efforts to establish a special fund to address this ongoing injustice through litigation.

Unlike in previous sessions, abortion legislation was not decided by party-line vote. Pro-abortion legislation was particularly insidious, with euphemistic and misleading subject titles and purpose

statements. Many of the bills proposed incremental expansions of abortion access, promotion and public funding without ever mentioning the word “abortion”. Other bills were an attempt to codify into state law, federal protections for abortion expanded under the Clinton and Obama administrations including key abortion provisions of the Affordable Care Act.

OVERCOMING COVID CHALLENGES – MDRTL made every effort to counteract Covid- related access and communications challenges. For the benefit of lawmakers and the public, MDRTL again published and circulated a bill tracking document to provide notification of our bill opposition and support. Legislative Committee members were routinely sent MDRTL Bill Alerts to notify them of problematic bills headed to their committees for debate and amendment. And for the first time, MDRTL authored and published the [Maryland Right to Life 2021 State Legislative Issue Summaries](#), to better inform lawmakers about abortion policy and trends as they related to specific bills under review this session. This original MDRTL publication will be updated and published for each future legislative session.

EXECUTIVE ACTIONS - There was a notable shift in Republican support for pro-life priorities after Governor Larry Hogan made public statements to the *Washington Post* calling for the purging of “radicals” including pro-lifers from the Republican Party. Pro-life lawmakers and organizations came under attack by Hogan-loyalists. But Larry Hogan’s record on life is indefensible. Hogan included record abortion spending in his FY 2022 budget, including millions of dollars in state Medicaid reimbursements for elective abortions, and millions more in public funding for abortion providers through the Maryland Family Planning Program. Because Hogan has refused to act through executive orders or veto power, this state taxpayer funding for abortion will be mandated and increased each year.

Select legislators proposed amendments to the Governor’s budget to restrict public funding for abortions to varying degrees, but these amendments were handily rejected by the majority. All senators and all but 8 delegates voted to approve the governor’s budget. *See how your representatives voted on the Governor Hogan’s budget bill [House/Senate](#).*

**** MDRTL supporters sent 988 letters to legislators in opposition to public funding for abortion.**

THANK YOU! **

Governor Hogan’s overreaching Covid emergency executive orders were given permanent effect by the opportunistic legislature. Covid crisis standard of care triage protocols, which reduced medical standards and the liability of medical providers during emergencies and medical scarcity, were adopted as *permanent* reduced standards of medical care. House leadership denied the Assembly the opportunity to protect vulnerable patients by blocking a vote on the *Nondiscrimination in Health Care Coverage Act*, solicited by MDRTL and introduced by Delegate Dan Cox (R-Frederick and Carroll Counties.)

Meanwhile, the Assembly widely supported the enactment the [Preserve Telehealth Access Act of 2021](#) to ensure that state and private insurance providers still would be obligated to pay full price for telehealth and other diminished services. While there are appropriate uses of telehealth that may benefit the general population, legislators refused to enact exceptions for telabortions, or the remote prescription of chemical abortion pills without a physician’s examination, which have proven 4 times more dangerous than surgical abortions.

Legislators also failed to enact protections for students from the distribution of chemical abortion pills in school-based health centers. Telabortions, which already are being committed by Planned Parenthood in Maryland under the guise of “research” despite current Food and Drug Administration safety restrictions, will now have increased distribution and public funding under state law. Again, House leadership blocked the Assembly from voting on the adoption of the *Abortion- Inducing Drug Risk Protocol Act*, a MDRTL-solicited bill that would have put in place common sense health and safety standards for women and girls in Maryland.

**** MDRTL supporters sent 1,128 letters to legislators in opposition to Telabortion. THANK YOU! ****

DEPARTMENTAL ACTIONS - The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) continued to demonstrate strong abortion bias, empowering Planned Parenthood and their coalition of abortion advocates in all aspects of state reproductive health policy and program development, but with a particular focus on expanding abortion access to youth in Maryland schools. Through abortion activists in the legislature, the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) and Planned Parenthood were successful in largely deregulating **School-Based Health Centers** and removing oversight, grant making authority and related reproductive health policy authority, away from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and replacing it with MDH bureaucracy. Another bill intended to expand MDH health standards into *private schools* was defeated. In 2020, MDH awarded Planned Parenthood more than \$80,000 in Covid relief funds despite the fact that Governor Hogan exempted Planned Parenthood from closures as an “essential service”.

[Click on Bill Number to see how your elected representatives voted on these NARAL supported bills:](#)

[HB34/SB278](#) – Maryland School-Based Health Center Standards- Telehealth

[HB401/SB438](#) – Public Schools – Pregnant and Parenting Students – Policies and Reports

[HB1148/SB830](#) – School-Based Health Centers – Guidelines and Administration of Grants

****** [TOP CAMPAIGN OF 2021](#) ******

MDRTL supporters sent 6,618 letters to legislators in opposition to the radical abortion agenda in our schools. THANK YOU!

PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY - Larry Hogan is term-limited in 2022 and state legislators must stand for re-election beginning with primary elections next spring. Elected officials must be held to their oaths of office to uphold the Constitution and to represent *all citizens* in Maryland, including those who hold *pro-life* views. 80% of people responding in a 2021 Marist Poll, whether “pro-life” or “pro-choice” said they agree that laws can protect the lives of both mothers and children. 58% polled oppose the public funding of abortion. Compulsory taxpayer funding of abortion is an egregious infringement on the people’s natural and Constitutional rights to life, Equal Protection and due process, freedom of speech and free exercise of religion. Abortion is the greatest human and civil rights abuse of our time, with people of color and children with disabilities being targeted for extermination. More than half of all pregnancies among Black women in Baltimore City end in abortion. The state will have no chance of

correcting racial inequities or ending the violence in our communities, until the state stops sponsoring eugenics and violence in the womb.

Despite Covid challenges and Governor Hogan's attempts to create a political environment hostile to life, MDRTL had a prolific session, identifying and responding effectively to more bad bills than in any other year. Through MDRTL's ongoing coalition building, we are better prepared each year through strategic pro-life partnerships. With increased funds development, educational outreach and grassroots activism, we will succeed in our mission to protect innocent human life at all stages.

MDRTL 2021 BILL OPPOSITION HIGHLIGHTS:

Maryland Right to Life (MDRTL) successfully lobbied against passage of 30 bills and provided opposition testimony in the House and Senate.

MDRTL supporters sent 17,000 letters to lawmakers to support pro-life policy.

***PRO-LIFE WIN!* Assisted Suicide Discarded**

Through the continued strength of our grassroots coalition against Physician Assisted Suicide, the death lobby failed to find Senate support for the introduction of this dangerous bill, which we have defeated 4 times in the last 6 years. This legislation would have sanctioned the commercialization of suicide without providing important consumer protections for patients and our most vulnerable citizens.

MDRTL and partners began work last spring to discourage introduction of the Physician Assisted Suicide bill this session. We advised legislators that reintroduction of the bill would be particularly offensive and tone deaf during the pandemic and medical scarcity. We stressed the importance of patient trust in hospitals and medical providers during the health emergency.

During the time of Covid-related crisis standard of care triage protocols, MDRTL worked with a network of patients rights advocates to intervene on behalf of patients who were being threatened with denial of care or removal of life support. We are especially grateful to friends at the ***Terri Schiavo Foundation***.

MDRTL sought to protect the rights of vulnerable patients with the introduction of the **Nondiscrimination in Health Care Coverage Act**, which is model legislation from National Right to Life.

MDRTL further sought to protect life through the publication and distribution of our FREE legal advanced medical directive document [*The Will to Live*](#). We encourage all to utilize this document for the protection of themselves and their loved ones. Please distribute freely.

PRO-LIFE WIN! Birth Mothers Protected

(**DEFEATED:** Senate Bill 331– *Adoption – Access to Birth and Adoption Records and Search, Contact, and Reunion Services* - Senator Susan Lee, D - Montgomery County)

This was the second year MDRTL defeated this bill that would have deprived birth mothers of their right to privacy in the adoption process and discouraged the life giving choice of adoption in favor of the destructive choice of abortion. This bill would have retroactively deprived birth mothers their existing right to choose whether to disclose their identity through the standard “disclosure veto”, and replace that with the weaker “Contact Preference Form” that provides no privacy protections. Maryland law already allows for an adoptee to receive family medical history without disclosing the birth parents’ identities. While we can understand adoptees’ desire to know, we must prioritize their right to be born.

MDRTL supporters sent over **133** opposition letters against the bill to key Committee members.

We wish to thank the following legislators for their role in defeating this bill: **Delegate Mike Griffith, Senator Ed Reilly, Senator Michael Hough, Senator Mary Beth Carozza.**

PRO-LIFE WIN! Abortion “Doula’s” Denied Funding

(**DEFEATED:** SB163 - *Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Doula Pilot Program* – Senator Arthur Ellis, D – Charles County)

MDRTL has defeated this dangerous bill the last two years. The bill deceptively speaks to pregnancy without disclosing that it can be used to further the abortion industry’s expansion into the area of abortion “doula’s” or abortion coaches. The abortion industry has rebranded itself and labeled the term “full spectrum doula services” to include abortion support services and even assisted suicide support. This bill would have established certification programs for these “doulas of death” resulting in the diversion of funding away from traditional doula services that are dedicated to healthy birth and delivery outcomes.

WATCH ALERT: When bill passage failed last year, the abortion-biased Maryland Department of Health took it upon themselves to authorize the *Doula Technical Assistance Advisory Group* without ensuring transparency or inclusivity of pro-life representation or traditional doula certifying bodies. According to the group *Catholic Doulas*, there are 100 different doula certifying bodies with no uniformity in standards. This bill would have enabled only 4 certifying groups to participate.

***PRO-LIFE WIN!* Pro-Life Speech and Action Protected**

(DEFEATED: HB308/SB162 *Courts – Civil Actions – Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation* – Senator Shelly Hettleman, D-Baltimore County and Delegate Sandy Rosenberg, D-Baltimore City)

The bill would have created exceptions from the definition of a *Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation* (SLAPP suit) and imposed a subjective set of criteria to deny individuals and organizations legal remedy against frivolous lawsuits. The language would substitute free speech with subjective or political value judgments. The bill also would have undermined the judicial requirement of **standing**, by allowing legal actions on behalf of the general population or some subset of the population otherwise loosely defined. This bill could have had a discriminatory impact on pro-life speech and action and could have been used to put pro-life pregnancy clinics out of business.

**** MDRTL supporters sent 988 letters to legislators in opposition of this bill. ****

We wish to thank **Senator Bob Cassilly (R-Harford)** for his excellent Committee work against passage of this discriminatory bill.

MDRTL 2021 BILL SUPPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

Maryland Right to Life (MDRTL) identified sponsors to introduce important pro-life legislation this session. MDRTL supporters sent 4,222 letters in support of this legislation.

Working alongside pro-life legislative leaders, MDRTL provided expert witness testimony through leading pro-life advocates, physicians and lawyers.

Abortion-Inducing Drug Risk Protocol Act

([House Bill 1198](#) , Delegate Dan Cox – R-Frederick and Carroll Counties)

The growing reliance on chemical abortions underscores the need for a state protocol for the use of abortion pills including informed consent specific to the efficacy, complications and abortion pill reversal. Strong informed consent requirements, such as those proposed by HB1198, would manifest both a trust in women and a justified concern for their welfare.

While we oppose all abortion, we strongly recommended that the state of Maryland enact reasonable regulations to protect the health and safety of girls and women by adopting the current FDA Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategies (REMS) safeguards that require that the distribution and use of mifepristone, the drug commonly used in chemical abortions, to be under the supervision of a “qualified health care provider” because of the drug’s potential for serious complications. The FDA REMS are the only real barrier to over the counter distribution of abortion pills and telabortion.

MDRTL and allies testified in support of this important legislation on March 19th. The bill was denied a vote by **Chairman Shane Pendergrass (D-Howard County)** and the House Health and Government Operations Committee.

****[VIEW MDRTL PANEL TESTIMONY HERE.](#)****

Maryland Right to Life extends our appreciation to the following witnesses:

- Dr. Steven Foley, Physician Member, American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists
- Laura Bogley-Knickman, JD, Legislative Director MDRTL
- Katie Glenn, JD, Americans United for Life
- Olivia Summers, Attorney, American Center for Law and Justice
- Pam Palumbo – CEO, Maryland Coalition of Medical Pregnancy Clinics
- Frank Arlinghaus - Howard County RTL

**** MDRTL supporters sent 2,203 letters to legislators in support of this bill. THANK YOU! ****

NON-DISCRIMINATION IN HEALTH CARE COVERAGE ACT

([House Bill](#) 1167, Delegate Dan Cox – R-Frederick and Carroll Counties)

The State of Maryland has an obligation to ensure that all citizens have equal access to life-saving medical care and treatment and that care is not denied based on disability, age, race, ethnicity, or other categories prohibited by law. This is particularly important in times of medical crisis and scarcity, when medical providers attempt to implement reduced standards of medical care and increased provider immunity. This bill would adopt a more inclusive and transparent process for developing medical standard of care protocols to ensure that the State's guidance to healthcare personnel and facilities lives up to the State's commitment to protect *all* of Maryland's residents.

****[VIEW MDRTL PANEL TESTIMONY HERE.](#)****

Maryland Right to Life extends our appreciation to the following witnesses:

- Wesley Smith, the Discovery Institution's Center on Human Exceptionalism
- Joseph Collier, Citizen Advocate
- Laura Bogley-Knickman, JD, Legislative Director MDRTL
- Frank Arlinghaus, Howard County RTL

**** MDRTL supporters sent 2,019 letters to legislators in support of this bill. THANK YOU! ****

Maryland Right to Life and its supporters provided grassroots advocacy for several additional pro-life bills during the 2021 legislative session.

A complete list of legislation acted upon by MDRTL this session can be found on the Legislation page of our website <http://www.mdrtl.org/legislation.html> .



Maryland Right to Life wishes to thank Delegate Dan Cox (R- Frederick and Carroll Counties) and all of the legislative leaders who were primary sponsors of important pro-life bills in the 2021 session.

Please take time to thank them for their efforts.

Senator Mary Beth Carozza (R- Somerset, Worcester, Wicomico Counties)

Senator Johnny Ray Salling (R – Baltimore County)

Delegate Dan Cox (R – Frederick and Carroll Counties)

Delegate Barrie Ciliberti (R – Carroll and Frederick Counties)

Delegate Ric Metzgar (R – Baltimore County)

Delegate William Wivell (R - Washington County)

MDRTL extends our appreciation to all of the members of the Maryland General Assembly who voted in support of life this session. TOGETHER WE WILL CREATE A PRO-LIFE FUTURE FOR MARYLAND.

****EARNED MEDIA: MDRTL INTERVIEWS ****

Maryland March for Life 2021 - [The Capital Gazette](#)

For additional information, please contact MDRTL's Legislative Director,
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