



MDRTL State Legislative Advocacy 2023 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 **64 legislative threats to life, provided testimony on 128 bills and sent nearly 70,000 constituent letters supporting life during the 2023 state legislative session.***

LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS - On April 10, 2023 the 443rd session of the Maryland General Assembly came to a close. In the wake of the Supreme Court’s *Dobbs* (June 2022) decision that overturned *Roe v. Wade* (1973), Democrat leaders vowed to enact a package of bills to make abortion-on-demand the law of the land in Maryland. In all, MDRTL reviewed and analyzed 2,275 pieces of legislation this session.

Maryland Right to Life began the session with renewed commitment following reorganization at the end of 2022. Under new direction, MDRTL was able to add a second pro-life lobbyist to our team for session. As a result, we increased the number of testimonies we provided by 21%. Deborah Brocato, a nurse by profession and longtime Pregnancy Resource Center volunteer, provided expert testimony on 78 bills, many involving medical standards of care and scope of practice for healthcare providers. Deborah’s advocacy efforts help yield MDRTL 45 legislative wins!

MDRTL also was successful in soliciting legislative sponsors for the introduction of critical pro-life bills, including the ***Coercive Abuse Against Mothers Prevention Act*** and the ***Pregnancy Options Tax Credit*** bill to support Pregnancy Resource Centers. We are grateful to the brave pro-life leaders who sponsored these timely bills!

* **MDRTL supporters sent 22,289 letters to legislators to oppose the “Reproductive Freedom” Amendment.**

* **MDRTL supporters sent 8,373 letters to legislators in support of pro-life legislation.**

* **MDRTL supporters sent 19,469 letters to legislators to stop Assisted Suicide.**

THANK YOU!!!

MDRTL 2023 BILL OPPOSITION HIGHLIGHTS:

PRO-LIFE WIN! Assisted Suicide – DEFEATED. HB933/SB845 – *End of Life Option Act* – Delegate Pena-Melnyk (D-Prince George’s) and Senator Jeffrey Waldstreicher (D-Montgomery). MDRTL utilized strategic partnerships to successfully defeat passage of the Assisted Suicide/euthanasia bill for the 5th time in last 8 years. New this year, MDRTL facilitated group efforts to provide Assisted Suicide education and training sessions for the public and lawmakers. Pro-death legislators have vowed to enact this deadly bill within the current four-year term. MDRTL will continue to lead efforts to defend the medically vulnerable, elderly, underinsured and those living with disabilities.

PRO-LIFE WIN! Attack on Religious Freedom - DEFEATED. HB 871/SB932 - *Declaration of Rights - Religious Freedom, Religious Tests, and Oaths and Affirmations*- Delegate Terri Hill (D-Baltimore and Howard) and Senator Anthony Muse (D-Prince George’s). For the 2nd time in 2 years, MDRTL developed new partnerships to defeat this attempt to remove all mention of God from the MD Constitution and Declaration of Rights. If enacted, religious freedoms and rights of conscience would be under attack across the board. (MDRTL sought amendments on several other bills that threatened rights of conscience for hospitals, healthcare providers and pharmacists.)

PRO-LIFE WIN! Attack on Pro-Life Speech and Action - DEFEATED. HB129/SB619 *Courts – Civil Actions – Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation* – Delegate Sandy Rosenberg (D-Baltimore City) and Senator Shelly Hettleman (D-Baltimore County). MDRTL defeated this bill for the 3rd times in 3 years, that would have allowed mass media and others to target pro-life speech through litigation by depriving an affirmative legal defense.

PRO-LIFE WIN! Sex Education Framework- DEFEATED. HB119/SB199 *Comprehensive Health Education Framework* – Delegate Vanessa Atterbeary (D-Howard), and Senator Clarence Lam (D-Howard & Anne Arundel). MDRTL was one of the first organizations to seek legislation to protect parent’s rights over their children’s medical decisions. This session we built new strategic partnerships with parental rights organizations across the state to oppose this bill that would have mandated on all county school systems, the state’s radical health and sex ed curriculum including age-inappropriate and medically inaccurate information about human reproduction, abortifacients and abortion. This was a united effort to defend our children against these aggressive and targeted attacks. **PARENTS BEWARE** – the Maryland State Superintendent of Schools, Mohammed Choudhury vowed during testimony to circumvent parental opposition and force this radical agenda on students through regulatory means.

PRO-LIFE LOSS. Abortion Amendment Ballot Question- ENACTED. HB 705/SB798 *Declaration of Rights - Right to Reproductive Liberty* –House Speaker Adrienne Jones (D-Baltimore) and Senate President Bill Ferguson (D-Baltimore City). Democrat lawmakers made it their top priority to pass this bill to create a fundamental right to abortion in the Constitution of the State of Maryland. The law will implement a ballot question in the November 2024 General Election, asking voters by a simple majority, to amend the state Constitution. While “reproductive freedom” is not defined in state statute, there is no question that such an amendment would all but prohibit legislative restrictions on abortion, including prohibitions on late –term and partial birth abortions. The bill will establish a monopoly of the abortion industry over women’s reproductive health and limit women’s access to lifesaving alternatives including Pregnancy Resource Centers.

Through the committed support of the pro-life community, MDRTL successfully defeated 3 previous attempts in the last 4 years to create a fundamental right to abortion in the state Constitution (Busch "Bodily Integrity" 2019, Lee "Privacy" 2020, Jones "Reproductive Freedom" 2022). **Beginning now, it will take the full strength of a united pro-life community in Maryland to raise public awareness and get out the vote to oppose this deadly amendment.**

PRO-LIFE LOSS. Abortion on College Campuses - ENACTED. HB477/SB341 *Public Senior Higher Ed Institutions – Reproductive Health Services-* Delegate Ariana Kelly (D-Montgomery) and Senator Brian Feldman (D-Montgomery). While we know that Planned Parenthood already is entrenched on most college campuses, this law forces Maryland taxpayers to subsidize those abortion services on-campus and to expand coordination of abortion services off-campus. **PARENTS BEWARE** - college-aged students are at greater risk of abortion coercion on college campuses and parental notice and consent to abortion is not required for girls age 16 and older.

PRO-LIFE LOSS. Abortion Shield Laws – ENACTED. A package of abortion shield bills, including HB808/SB859 *Reproductive Health Protection Act-* Delegate Nicole Williams (D- Prince George’s), Senator Will Smith (D-Montgomery) and HB812/SB786 *Reproductive Health Services-Protected Information* and Insurance- Delegate Sandy Rosenberg (D- Baltimore City), Senator Shelly Hettleman (D- Baltimore), was enacted to protect abortion providers and those who assist in interstate human trafficking for the purpose of abortion. The laws prevent interstate cooperation in criminal investigations and prevent discovery of patient medical histories related to abortion. Despite best efforts to defeat these bills, Democrat lawmakers have established Maryland as a regional late-term abortion tourism destination.

MDRTL 2023 BILL SUPPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

Maryland Right to Life (MDRTL) worked with legislators who introduced important pro-life legislation this session. During hearings, MDRTL provided expert witness testimony through leading state and national pro-life advocates, physicians and lawyers. These pro-life bills were not defeated, but were suppressed. Democrat leadership systemically discriminates against the content of pro-life speech by denying votes on all pro-life legislation. **MDRTL will continue to be a voice for the voiceless and advocate for pro-life laws in Maryland.**

Coercive Abuse Against Mothers Prevention Act – House Bill 1043/Senate Bill 832, **Delegate Sue McComas** (R-Harford) and **Senator Mary Beth Carozza** (R- Somerset, Wicomico, Worcester) – To prevent abortion coercion and implement informed consent and reporting requirements as well as legal enforcement standards.

Income Tax-Pregnancy Options Tax Credit – House Bill 641, **Delegate William Wivell** (R-Washington) –To create a state tax credit for cash donations to Pregnancy Resource Centers.

Public Health- Abortion – House Bill 958, **Delegate Ric Metzgar** (R-Baltimore)- To restore the physician only requirement for performing abortions and to protect babies with a detectable heartbeat.

Abortion-Ultrasound and Waiting Period – House Bill 973, **Delegate Barry Ciliberti** (R- Carroll & Frederick) – To ensure women access to ultrasound and informed consent before abortion.

Maryland Maternity Care Access Program – House Bill 1101/Senate Bill 901 – **Delegate William Wivell** (R-Washington) and **Senator Mike McKay** (R- Allegany, Garrett & Washington) – To establish a fund to ensure women access to lifesaving alternatives to abortion including prenatal care and Pregnancy Resource Centers.

Maryland Right to Life wishes to thank all of the legislative leaders who were sponsors of these important pro-life bills in the 2023 session.

Please take time to thank them for their courageous efforts!

TOGETHER WE WILL CREATE A PRO-LIFE FUTURE FOR MARYLAND.

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