

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**ANNAPOLIS, MD** – The Maryland General Assembly has passed a bill that seeks to amend the Maryland Constitution and create a state fundamental right to “reproductive freedom”. The state will ask voters to approve the amendment language on the November 2024 general election ballot. While the term “reproductive freedom” is yet undefined, there is no question that the amendment would be used to suppress pro-life speech and action in the state.

After nearly fifty years of federal abortion mandates, the Supreme Court decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* (2022) finally returned the power to restrict abortion to the states. But while many states are choosing to move forward with legislative protections for preborn human beings that reflect advances in medical science, the state of Maryland has taken a regressive and *even oppressive* approach to abortion.

Far surpassing former federal abortion precedent, the Democrat majority in the Maryland General Assembly has established a taxpayer funded monopoly of the abortion industry over women’s reproductive health. While Wes Moore, Maryland’s newly installed Democrat governor and former CEO of the Robin Hood Foundation, may be determined to add a state abortion amendment as a feather in his political cap, the reality is that he cannot take credit from the legislative branch.

Senate Bill 798 and House Bill 705, the so-called “Right to Reproductive Freedom” bills, were sponsored by Senate President Bill Ferguson (D-Baltimore City) and House Speaker Adrienne Jones (D-Baltimore County). Similar bills have been introduced but thwarted by pro-life advocates three times in the previous four legislative sessions, including a 2020 privacy amendment and a 2019 bodily autonomy amendment

sponsored by now deceased, longstanding Speaker of the House, Michael Busch (D-Anne Arundel County).

Maryland Right to Life (MDRTL) led grassroots coalition efforts to defend the unalienable right to life guaranteed by the Constitution against the three prior legislative attacks. During recent state legislative hearings, their Executive Director, Laura Bogley testified that the abortion amendment “*would empower the state to weaponize our state Constitution and use the full force of state government to silence opposition and squeeze out any pro-life competition to the abortion empire’s death on demand agenda*”. Bogley further cautioned lawmakers that “*this bill would deprive women reproductive choices and access to lifesaving alternatives to abortion by threatening the very existence of pro-life pregnancy centers.*”

Many Republican lawmakers are asking why such an amendment is necessary considering that Maryland has some of the most liberal abortion policies in the nation.

Despite the Supreme Court’s *Dobbs* ruling, abortion remains legal in Maryland through all nine months of pregnancy and for any reason, under the *Maryland Freedom of Choice Act* (1991). According to the *Institute for Women’s Policy Research*, 81% of women in Maryland have access to an abortion provider in their county. At least two practices in the state perform late term abortions of viable babies at the age of 26 weeks or older. Contrary to the fear mongering often heard from abortion proponents, women in Maryland are not being threatened with prosecution for seeking abortion nor are they being denied medical intervention for miscarriage or ectopic pregnancy.

But the state has long forsaken its promise of “safe, legal and rare” abortion, offering women and girls nothing more than unlimited access to abortion. The legislature has gone to such extremes to deregulate the abortion industry that they have removed abortion from the spectrum of healthcare in all ways except funding. Democrat lawmakers have repealed criminal penalties and statutory restrictions on abortionists and abortion practices. Regulations on abortion clinics and practices are not routinely enforced, including mandatory reporter requirements in suspected cases of rape or sex trafficking. Physicians now serve only a tangential role on paper *if at all*, either as remote medical directors for abortion clinics or as remote prescribers of abortion drugs.

As a result of this abortion extremism, the practice of abortion in Maryland has become the “red light district” of medicine, populated by dangerous, substandard providers. Through teleabortion and the unregulated proliferation of “Do-It-Yourself” abortion drugs, the abortion industry itself is exposing women to “back alley” style abortions, where they bleed alone without medical supervision or care.

Abortion remains legal because it is lucrative and abortion is big business in Maryland. Maryland has become a state-sponsor of abortion, committing millions in taxpayer dollars to fund the largely unregulated abortion industry. This is despite the fact that a 2023 Marist poll reported that 60% of people oppose public funding for abortion.

Maryland taxpayers subsidize the abortion industry through direct Maryland Medicaid reimbursements to abortion providers. According to the Maryland Department of Legislative Services, state taxpayers paid more than \$7.6 million last year for Medicaid reimbursements to abortionists for more than 11,000 elective abortions.

While Maryland is one of only three states that shields abortionists by failing to report annual abortion data to the Centers for Disease Control, Maryland Right to Life estimates that over 30,000 children are killed through abortion violence each year in Maryland.

Maryland Right to Life estimates that taxpayers pay more than \$20 million each year to abortion providers and their network through various state contracts, departmental appropriations and grants, including through the Maryland State Department of Education. Planned Parenthood is one of the largest providers of sex education curriculum, but state law does not require the curriculum to be medically accurate nor age appropriate.

Abortion activists occupying the state legislature, including now Senator Arianna Kelly (D-Montgomery County), the former Executive Director of NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland, have enacted extreme policies to establish Maryland as a national destination for abortion tourism.

In 2022, then Delegate Kelly sponsored the *Abortion Care Access Act*, which reduced the standard of medical care by allowing non-physicians to be certified to commit both

chemical and surgical abortions through birth. The Act forces taxpayers to pay \$3.5 million each year to train this substandard abortion workforce and forces insurance companies to fully fund these abortion procedures. State regulations attached to the Act recommend an additional \$12 million a year be added to the state budget to fully fund this abortion certification program.

Abortion blood money is fueling political campaigns. In fact, the nation's three leading abortion organizations reported spending \$1.5 million to help Democrat candidates win 2022 midterm elections. 60% of Maryland Democrat lawmakers were endorsed in the previous election by the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL).

In a January press conference, MDRTL's Laura Bogley warned Marylanders that by enacting the abortion amendment, "*Maryland will no longer be known as the Free State, but the Free Abortion State.*" She challenged Governor Moore to find solutions for childhood poverty that don't include killing poor children.

With pro-life legislators outnumbered three to one in the Maryland General Assembly, a legislative solution may be unlikely in Maryland. But pro-life advocates have demonstrated tenacity in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds and have not wavered in their commitment to provide support to women and families in need.

It is important to note that while the term "reproductive freedom" is not defined in Maryland law, the bill sponsors say it would include new rights broader than abortion rights. Some of these new rights may include commercial uses of human embryos and transgender rights including the use of puberty blocking drugs and surgical mutilation of genitalia- even among children.

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Maryland Right to Life is a non-profit organization dedicated to defending innocent human life from conception through natural death. For more information visit <http://www.mdrtl.org.html>.