



We must act NOW and ensure reproductive freedom TODAY, to guarantee it for TOMORROW

Dear Jessica,

I'm not going to lie to you, I have a lot to ask of you this week. But that is because there is so much on the line. At this time of year, when the Committee hearings are lasting well into the night, and floor sessions are packed with bills, it is easy for legislators to lose sight of what is really important to their constituents. And with a full package of reproductive rights bills moving, not to mention critical bills to help survivors of intimate partner and sexual violence, it is more important than ever that we remind them that we are strong, we are loud, and we demand action.

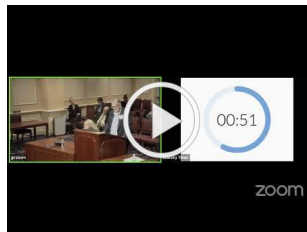
Here's a look at what is happening and what needs to be done. Or jump to the good stuff below where I list out who to contact for which bills!

On Friday the House Health & Government Operations Committee (HGO) voted [HB705 – Declaration of Rights – Right to Reproductive Freedom](#) out of Committee! This means that the bill will move to a vote by the entire House of Delegates.

Please take a moment to [thank Chair Pena-Melnyk and the members of HGO who voted in favor of this historic legislation!](#) And then, [contact YOUR Delegate](#) and ask them to VOTE IN FAVOR of HB705 when it makes it to the House floor this week!

We expect the Senate Finance Committee to also be voting on the [Constitutional Amendment bill – SB798](#) – tomorrow.

The last bill hearing for the Reproductive Rights Package of 2023 will be heard on Wednesday, when the House Judiciary Committee hears [HB808 – Reproductive Health Protection Act](#). To learn more about why it is imperative that we shield Marylanders from the long-arm of anti-abortion states, watch the Senate hearing below.



This week will also see a number of bills aimed at strengthening our laws for survivors of intimate partner violence and sexual assault, being heard or voted on in Committee, including:

[HB14 – Family Law – Grounds for Divorce](#) was voted out of the House this week, which means it is now up to the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to vote on its cross-file [SB36](#) which was heard back in January. This bill removes barriers for people seeking divorce and updates our laws surrounding the process. Contact the members of JPR and ask them to support SB36.

[SB129 - Criminal Law - Sexual Crimes - Repeal of Spousal Defense](#)

Sponsor: Senator Kelly/Secretary Lee (Judicial Proceedings)

For the past four years, the WLC has stood beside the Maryland Coalition for Sexual Assault and other partners to fight for the repeal of an archaic law that allows marriage to serve as a complete defense to some sex crimes. Sexual assault violates a woman's bodily integrity, freedom, and self-determination; the harm is not mitigated because the rape occurred in her marriage bed, but rather is compounded. It is beyond time to end this offensive practice. It has once again passed the House, and

so the fight has returned to the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee.

[HB861 - Criminal Procedure - Victim Compensation – Alterations](#)

Sponsor: Delegate Smith (Judiciary)

[SB788 - Criminal Procedure - Victim Compensation – Alterations](#)

Sponsor: Senator Hettleman (Judicial Proceedings)

This bill is being introduced for the first (and hopefully last) time this session in an attempt to expand upon the eligibility of victims of crime for awards from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board to include all victims of crime. It also expands the type of evidence that may be provided to establish victimization and removes a requirement that victims file for compensation within 48 hours of the crime occurring. We are supporting this bill because many of our clients have suffered economic loss due to their status as survivors, but the current process for applying to the Board is arduous, unduly restrictive, and makes it nearly impossible for clients to receive compensation. This legislation is a first step towards establishing meaningful assistance for victims of crime.

[SB615 - Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services - Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kit Reporting Program](#)

[SB789 - Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kits - Preservation and Storage](#)

Sponsor for both bills: Senator Hettleman (Judicial Proceedings)

Both of these bills seek to address failures within our criminal justice system related to the collection, storage, and utilization of Sexual Assault Evidence Kits.

As always, we depend upon you to let elected officials know how much this legislation means to you and our community. Please take a moment to take action today!

Feeling a little overwhelmed by it all? Scroll down below for a recap of who to contact!

Onward together,



TAKE ACTION TODAY!

- Thank [these members](#) of the House Health and Government Operations Committee that voted in favor of Reproductive Freedom!
- [Contact YOUR Delegate](#) and ask them to vote in favor of HB705 – Declaration of Rights – Right to Reproductive Freedom!
- Ask [members of Senate Finance](#) to vote FAVORABLY on:
 - SB798 – Declaration of Rights – Right to Reproductive Freedom [and](#)
 - SB786 - Health - Reproductive Health Services - Protected Information and Insurance Requirements.
- Tell the members of [Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee](#) that you support:
 - SB859 – Reproductive Health Protection Act
 - SB36 – Family Law – Grounds for Divorce
 - SB129 - Criminal Law - Sexual Crimes - Repeal of Spousal Defense
- Let the members of the [House Judiciary Committee](#) know you want HB705 – Reproductive Health Protection Act enacted into law.

P.S. As always, if you appreciate the work we do, whether in the General Assembly or through our [direct legal services](#) across the State, [give here!](#) And if this email was forwarded to you by a friend, make sure to sign up for our legislative alerts [here!](#)

P.P.S. **Save the Date for the WLC's [Annual Celebration and Awards Ceremony](#) on May 3rd at 6pm at Citron!** Join us in presenting the Rosalyn B. Bell Award to Marla Zide, Esq.; the Dorothy Beatty Memorial Award to Robyn Elliott; and the Access to Justice Award to Natasha M. Dartigue, Esq. and Debbie Feinstein, Esq. For more information or to buy tickets, click [HERE](#).

P.P.P.S. Save the date for these upcoming events from our partners and friends!

- Hosted by the Women Legislators of Maryland, Executive Alliance, Planned Parenthood of Maryland, and Pro Choice Maryland, the **2023 Gender Justice Rally** will be held March 6th at 6pm at Lawyer's Mall in Annapolis. Register to attend [HERE!](#)

LAWYER'S MALL - ANNAPOLIS

MARCH 6

6-7:15 pm

Hosting Organizations:
Executive Alliance | Planned Parenthood of Maryland
Pro-Choice Maryland | Women Legislators of Maryland

MARYLAND
GENDER JUSTICE
2023 RALLY

- Join Leadership Baltimore County for a **Rebalance, Rediscover, Reinvent** event on how leaders support women at home, and work, and in the community on Thursday, March 16th 8:30-10:30am in Owings Mills.

40th LEADERSHIP
BALTIMORE COUNTY

**REBALANCE
REDISCOVER
REINVENT**

How leaders support women at home, at work and in the community

THURSDAY, MARCH 16
8:30 - 10:30 AM

BECO Towers, 10461 Mill Run Circle, Owings Mills

Speakers

Moderator

Janet Currie
President
Bank of America
Greater Maryland

Heather Iliff
President & CEO
Maryland Nonprofits

Natasha Wainwright
Owner
Natasha's Just Brittle

Sloane Brown
Podcast/Interview
Host

\$30 LBC MEMBERS, \$35 NON-MEMBERS
[Register at leadbaltimore.org](https://www.leadbaltimore.org)

EVENT PARTNERS

Girls on the Run | iMentor | Maryland Nonprofits | Women's Law Center of Maryland

Have an event you'd like to share with us? Send us an [email!](#)

About The Women's Law Center of Maryland: The vision of the Women's Law Center of Maryland is a legal system that provides justice and fairness for women. The Women's Law Center's mission is to ensure the physical safety, economic security, and autonomy of women throughout the State. We work towards this goal by providing direct legal representation, information and referral services, and legislative advocacy.

Our efforts to promote justice, fairness, and equality for women are only possible because of friends like you.

[Give Today](#)

The Women's Law Center of Maryland, Inc. is a charitable organization designated as tax-exempt under Internal Revenue Code section 501(c)(3). A copy of our financial statement is available upon request. Documents and information submitted under the State of Maryland Charitable Solicitations Act are available from the Office of the Secretary of State of Maryland, Annapolis, MD 21401 for the cost of copying and postage.



