



## Celebrating 50 Years of Advancing Justice

Dear Jessica,

On Thursday of last week elected officials from across the state gathered in Annapolis to make an unequivocal statement: **reproductive freedom in Maryland is a fundamental right**. Governor Moore and Lieutenant Governor Miller, flanked by House Speaker Adrienne Jones and Senate President Bill Ferguson, as well as leaders from both chambers, [presented a package of legislation that will not only ensure access to reproductive health care for generations to come, but also expand access while protecting Marylanders who provide or receive abortion care from criminal, civil, and administrative penalties as well as from violations of privacy.](#)

You can watch the whole press conference in its entirety below.



Together, the four bills will position Maryland as a leader in reproductive health care access. As surrounding states contemplate and move forward with more restrictions, it is imperative that Maryland act to not only ensure access for Marylanders, but for folks traveling to our great state in search of the abortion care they need. This package of bills is critically important and whilst leadership has announced their backing that in no way guarantees these bills will pass without a ground-swell of support from constituents. We will provide more information on each of these bills as hearings get scheduled (spoiler alert: one of them is being heard TOMORROW!) and we will let you know how you can help support access to abortion care in Maryland.

Here are the bills in the leadership package:

HB705/SB798 - [Declaration of Rights - Right to Reproductive Freedom](#)  
Sponsors: Speaker Jones and President Ferguson

HB808/SB859 - [Reproductive Health Protection Act](#)  
Sponsors: Delegates Williams and Hill and Senator Smith

HB477/SB341 - [Public Senior Higher Education Institutions - Reproductive Health Services Plans – Requirements](#)  
Sponsors: Delegate Kelly and Senator Feldman

HB812/SB786 - [Health - Reproductive Health Services - Protected Information and Insurance Requirements](#)

Sponsors: Delegate Rosenberg and Senator Hettleman

Meanwhile, last week saw [the “drop” deadlines for both the House and the Senate](#), meaning that [all drafted legislation had to be sent to the “hopper” in order to avoid being considered a late filed bill with additional hurdles to surpass](#). That means we saw a flood of new bills filed and went from roughly 800 total pieces of legislation to over 2000 bills filed! Many of those bills were dropped right on the deadline, meaning [we won't see bill hearings until they have been presented and read in their respective chambers](#). But we know they're coming!

At the same time, this week we have a number of really important bills being heard in Committees, including one of the 4 reproductive rights bills referenced earlier. Please follow along as we expect more voting sessions to be scheduled as well.

**Tuesday, February 14, 2023**

[HB477 - Public Senior Higher Education Institutions - Reproductive Health Services Plans – Requirements](#)

House Appropriations Committee (Sponsor: Delegate Kelly)

Many college campuses have little to no access to essential reproductive healthcare resources. In cases of sexual assault, unprotected or coerced sex, and failed birth control, on campus access to emergency contraception and medicated abortion is an important way for students to maintain bodily autonomy and prevent unwanted pregnancy in a timely and private manner. HB477 will require that public 4-year colleges and universities provide 24-hour access to over-the-counter contraception on campus through student health centers, retail outlets on campus or vending machines, or referrals for a full range of reproductive health services.

[HB283 - Maryland Medical Assistance Program – Gender-Affirming Treatment \(Trans Health Equity Act\)](#)

House Health & Government Operations Committee (Sponsor: Delegate Kaiser)

For over fifty years the Women’s Law Center has been a leading voice in the fight for women’s rights and gender equity. And when we say women, that *always* includes transgender women, because transgender women are women. As women, we all deserve the same access to physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy. HB283 seeks to address one of the greatest disparities faced by the Trans community by requiring Medicaid to cover medically necessary gender-affirming care. Together we can eliminate health disparities and work towards equity for everyone.

[HB181 Four-Day Workweek Pilot Program and Income Tax Credit – Established \(Four-Day Workweek Act of 2023\)](#)

House Economic Matters Committee (Sponsor: Vaughan Stewart)

This is the cross-file bill of [SB197](#) that we testified on last week and that will create a pilot program to incentivize 4 day work weeks in Maryland. It is a novel approach to addressing the crushing demands of balancing work and caregiving so many Maryland women face.

**Wednesday, February 15, 2023**

[SB344 - Income Tax - Caregiver Tax Credit](#) – Senate Budget & Taxation Committee (Sponsor: Senator Benson)

More than 57% of all caregiving in Maryland is done by women, and this unpaid and often invisible labor comes with not only emotional and physical costs, by financial ones as well, with most caregivers spending on average 26% of their income on caregiving needs. This legislation creates a tax credit on qualified caregiving expenses to help ease the burden on Maryland families.

**Thursday, February 16, 2023**

[HB630 - Public Utilities - Primary and Secondary Account Holders - Domestic Violence Protections](#)

House Economic Matters Committee (Sponsor: Delegate Queen)

Survivors of domestic violence face a tangle of financial and practical barriers to extricating themselves from their abusers. One such complication arises when a victim wishes to flee the home they share with their abuser and finds that they cannot remove themselves from related utilities accounts without notifying their abusers and risking additional violence. HB630 will allow victims to easily remove themselves from utilities accounts without having their abuser’s knowledge or consent.

We will provide updates on these bills and others we are working on as session progresses. In the meantime, don’t forget to let [your legislators](#) know about what issues matter most to you!

Onward,



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!

[Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence Annual Memorial Service](#) - Tuesday, February 21st at 4pm on Zoom

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!](#)

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.*



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