



Celebrating 50 Years of Advancing Justice

Dear Jessica,

Exciting news! Today the bill to create a constitutional amendment to protect reproductive rights for generations to come will be introduced on the House floor. If passed, [HB705 - Declaration of Rights - Right to Reproductive Freedom](#), which is sponsored by none other than the Speaker of the House, will lead to a ballot initiative to be voted on in the 2024 general election. This same bill was introduced [last session](#) and passed the House with overwhelming support, but unfortunately never made it out of the Senate. We will once again be actively involved in supporting this important, once-in-a-life, opportunity to protect our reproductive freedom. Stay tuned and scroll down below for more ways to stay informed about reproductive rights in Maryland!

While HB705 has yet to be assigned a hearing date, there are a number of bills that are being heard this week, some of which have already been heard in one chamber and are now having their cross-files heard.

Bills Being Heard for the First Time This Week

[SB197 - Four-Day Workweek Pilot Program and Income Tax Credit - Established \(Four-Day Workweek Act of 2023\)](#) (Sponsor: Senator Hettleman)

SB 197 is a novel approach at addressing workplace staffing shortages, employee burn out, and the continued repercussions of the “she-cession”, by creating a tax credit for corporations that shift to a four day work week model without reducing the salaries of its employees. The WLC is working with the sponsor to ensure that the legislation is clear that this is not incentivizing compressed workweeks, where employees continue to work 40 hours per week but in fewer days. Instead, this legislation intends to support models utilized in other jurisdictions, by reducing the employee's hours to 20% per week. Studies have shown this model leads to an increase in productivity and employee retention. As women continue to be predominantly in charge of childcare and household duties, whilst still working, a 4 day work week would alleviate many of the increasingly heavy burdens women in the workforce face.

[HB 324 - Child Abuse and Neglect - Domestic Violence](#) (Sponsor: Delegate Lopez)

This legislation creates a rebuttable presumption that being a victim of domestic violence does not in and of itself constitute child abuse or neglect. More specifically, it means that child neglect does not automatically include a victim of domestic violence failing to protect a child from witnessing domestic violence, failing to leave a home or relationship in which domestic violence has occurred, failing to call the police or social services, or failing to file a protective order. Instead of holding abusers accountable for acts of domestic violence, some Child Protective Services (CPS) workers and others in the legal system instead try to force victims to end the relationship, move out of the house, call police or take other legal action to stop the abuse by threatening to remove the children from the victim's care or actually doing so. This approach is misguided at best and can, in some instances, actually increase the danger for the victim and her children, as the time immediately after separation from an abuser is the most dangerous. This is neither trauma-informed nor a victim-focused practice. HB324 will help to address this issue.

Bills with Cross-File Hearings This Week

[SB185 - Maryland State Police Gun Center – Firearms Surrendered Under Final Protective Orders](#) (Sponsor: Senator Beidle)

This is the cross-file hearing for [HB3](#) and seeks to establish a tracking mechanism to give us data about whether Maryland is effectively getting firearms out of the hands of respondents in final protective orders.

[HB 285 – Family Law – Custody Evaluators –Qualifications and Trainings](#) (Sponsor: Delegate Atterbeary)

House Bill 285 is the cross-file hearing for [SB13](#) and would move qualifications for custody evaluators in family law cases from the Maryland Rules to the Maryland Code.

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. If you're interested in getting even more information related to the state of reproductive rights, and the legislative package seeking to support abortion care in Maryland, follow the Marylanders for Reproductive Choice coalition, of which the WLC is a member of the steering committee! MRC is on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#): @mdreprochoice!

P.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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