



Women's Law Center of Maryland

Celebrating 50 Years of Advancing Justice

Dear Jessica,

As you probably know by now, our mission is to ensure the physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy of women throughout Maryland. And this week in Annapolis there are bills that have a profound impact on each of those three core values.

Physical Safety

[House Bill 412 Criminal Law - Sexual Crimes - Consent and Second-Degree Rape](#)

Sponsor: Delegate Shetty (Judiciary)

It should be well-settled that sex without mutual agreement is rape. Long gone are the days where it was acceptable to accuse someone of “asking for it” or claiming sex was owed to someone because of prior behavior. Students are now uniformly taught in school that sexual activity without consent is unambiguously wrong. And yet our criminal laws fail to reflect that. HB412 will update our antiquated laws to make sure factfinders look to the totality of the circumstances when determining if an act was consensual. It is not affirmative consent, but rather a common sense approach to providing justice.

Economic Security

[Senate Bill 345 Maryland Fair Scheduling Act](#)

Sponsor: Senator Benson (Finance)

Juggling a work schedule with caregiving is an Olympic sport for even the most seasoned working parent. Yet workers within the restaurant and retail industries increasingly face “just-in-time” scheduling practices, including being given very little notice of their work schedules, being sent home early when work is slow without being paid for their scheduled shifts, and being assigned to “on-call” shifts that require them to call their employer (or wait to be called) to find out whether they will be required to report to work. While this benefits the employers, it leaves families scrambling, and has economic and logistical costs that detrimentally affect both parents and children. SB345 would alleviate some of those concerns and help level the playing field for working parents.

Bodily Autonomy

[House Bill 705 Declaration of Rights – Right to Reproductive Freedom](#)

Sponsor: Speaker Jones (Health & Government Operations)

It has been less than a year since *Roe v. Wade* was overturned, and we have already seen its devastating affects across the nation. The abortion landscape has become fragmented and increasingly polarized as pro-abortion states work hard to protect access to abortion care, and anti-abortion states have passed bans and restrictions making it difficult, if not impossible, for people to access

the care they need. Indeed, at least twenty-four states have banned abortion or are likely to do so in the imminent future. This means millions of Americans are without access to critical health care and are denied the right to bodily autonomy. The Court in *Dobbs* made clear that abortion is an issue left to be decided by the States, and so it is now up to the state of Maryland to finish the job we started last year and pave the way for a constitutional amendment. This is the clearest and most explicit method of ensuring that the right to reproductive freedom is not vulnerable to attack and will remain for generations to come. While reproductive rights are being eroded in neighboring states, Maryland must act affirmatively to ensure all Marylanders have the fundamental right to reproductive freedom.

There are other important bills being heard this week, including:

[HB 361 Certificates of Birth - Issuance of New Certificates - Sex Designation \(Birth Certificate Modernization Act\)](#)

Sponsor: Delegate Smith (Health & Government Operations)

This bill will make it easier for transgender folks to update their birth certificates to reflect their gender identity, reducing stigma and risks of discrimination and harassment. The WLC strongly feels that gender justice issues must include transgender rights and is supporting this legislation.

[SB858 Firearm Safety - Storage Requirements and Youth Suicide Prevention \(Jaelynn's Law\)](#)

Sponsor: Senator Smith (Judicial Proceedings)

With mass shootings at an all-time high, the gun pandemic is devastating to our nation. This bill will impose requirements on keeping guns safe and out of the hands of those who should not have access to them. Because we know that access to a gun makes it [five times more likely that a woman will die at the hands of a domestic abuser](#), the WLC is supporting an amendment to this bill that would specifically include a respondent in a Final Protective Order as someone who should not have access to the guns.

[SB341 Public Senior Higher Education Institutions – Reproductive Health Services Plans – Requirements](#)

Sponsor: Senator Feldman (Education, Energy, and the Environment)

This is the cross-file of [HB477](#), heard last week, and it is one of the bills in the [legislative leadership's package of reproductive bills](#)

Thanks for your commitment to these issues and for pledging to take action and contact legislators. Time and again we hear from elected officials that they moved a bill forward due to the groundswell of support they received from folks like you, or conversely, that a good bill died because no one voiced their support. That is why we are so grateful for your time and dedication!

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!](#)



- 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.

**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



**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



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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