

**CEO Karen J. Nelson Testimony on Council Bill 23-0185R: Reproductive Options for Everyone  
November 29, 2023**

Planned Parenthood of Maryland (PPM) applauds the Baltimore City Council for its bold step introducing a bill that would codify its own version of the 2023 Reproductive Health Protection Act into City Code. Only when every jurisdiction--both state and local-- and once Maryland voters make known their support of a person's freedom to make decisions about their own reproductive healthcare can we be certain that the regressive agenda of a vocal minority will not triumph in Maryland. As such, this piece of legislation is a crucial statement that Marylanders, and those travelling to Maryland for care, have nothing to fear when they seek health care in Baltimore.

PPM provides Marylanders and anyone coming to Maryland a full range of reproductive health services—birth control, sexually-transmitted infection testing and treatment, cancer screenings and abortion services. In the current political environment, the provision of abortion, a health service that is legally protected in Maryland, puts clinicians at risk for civil, criminal, and professional penalties for treating patients coming from localities where abortion bans are in place. This legislation provides a layer of protection from these adverse actions, which is critical to recruiting and retaining healthcare providers and ensuring access to high-quality reproductive health care. Particularly now.

As the meritless lawsuit filed in Texas federal court against the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) attempting to roll back its approval of mifepristone continues its journey through the nation's highest court, the City's resolution is even more relevant. This is an important lawsuit for providers because it has the capacity to: 1) change the medication regimen and increases the length of time needed to provide and complete a medication abortion; 2) demonstrates how easily bad actors in states hostile to sexual and reproductive health can impose their activist will on medical care that is legal in Maryland and supported by decades of rigorous safety data; and finally, 3) increases the risk to providers if patients take their legally prescribed medications across state lines.

With this resolution the City states unequivocally that it will not support out-of-state investigations about a person's legal reproductive health decisions. We are seeing an onslaught of laws and lawsuits aimed at intimidating people from taking ownership of their own reproductive decisions. Sustained and organized campaigns are seeking to punish those that assist people in exercising their bodily autonomy. This legislation serves as an opportunity for the City to give a resounding response—we will not tolerate bullying our residents, our care providers, or our support networks. By prohibiting the use of City funds and directing City agencies to refrain from storing reports on abortion, miscarriage or other reproductive health care or conducting surveillance related to patients, organizations and providers for the purpose of determining if an abortion has occurred, this bill allows Baltimore's healthcare network to shield itself from threats and intimidation tactics of less progressive states.

**Thank you for your consideration, and I urge a favorable report on this bill.**