

F R O M	Name & Title	Dr. Letitia Dzirasa, Commissioner	Health Department AGENCY REPORT	
	Agency Name & Address	Health Department 1001 E. Fayette Street Baltimore, Maryland 21201		
	Subject/ Position:	22-00110R – Investigative Hearing – Baltimore City as an Abortion Rights Protection Jurisdiction Favorable		

To: President and Members
of the City Council
c/o 409 City Hall

July 27, 2022

The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) is pleased to have the opportunity to review Council Bill #22-0110R, entitled, “Investigative Hearing – Baltimore City as an Abortion Rights Protection Jurisdiction.” The purpose of this resolution is to evaluate if Baltimore City is prepared for an influx of patients seeking to terminate a pregnancy, to identify current barriers to accessing abortion healthcare services, to identify disparities in the ability to access abortion healthcare, specifically for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community and for marginalized racial and ethnic groups, to identify safety concerns abortion healthcare providers have in the present political environment and explore how to address these concerns, and to specify how the recently-passed State Abortion Care Access Act will affect abortion healthcare services in Baltimore City.

The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) strives to support residents to be safe and healthy. The decision about whether, when, or how to become a parent is one of the most critical an individual will ever make. BCHD believes that residents need access to comprehensive health care, including counseling, birth control, abortion, prenatal care, and parenting support. Each service needs to be available, affordable, and accessible so people can make choices that preserve health and wellbeing.

Abortion care in Maryland is safe and legal, at all stages of a pregnancy. Maryland has continued to expand critical access to birth control and abortion care will always be an integral part of the full spectrum of women’s health care. Maryland is one of 16 states that uses Medicaid funds to cover abortion care in certain circumstances. Additionally, many private health insurance plans in Maryland also cover abortion care. With the overturning of *Roe v Wade*, Maryland abortion providers have anticipated an influx of out-of-state people crossing state lines to seek abortion services. Alongside expanding coverage of abortion care, Maryland also houses two of the four national late term abortion clinics as well as over 20 different abortion service sites.

In April 2022, the Maryland General Assembly passed and overrode a veto by Governor Hogan for the Abortion Care Access Act (ACAA) (HB 937). The ACAA, expands who can perform abortions in the state to include nurse practitioners, nurse midwives, and physician assistants. The bill also provides \$3.5 million in financial support to train health care

professionals in reproductive services. The bill will make the state's existing abortion care coverage under Medicaid permanent, and will require private health insurance plans — with exceptions for those with religious or legal exemption — to cover abortion care without cost-sharing or deductibles. With the passage of the ACA in 2022, Maryland law will aim to provide equitable access to abortion coverage, whether with private insurance or Medicaid.

However, despite the vast expansion of healthcare coverage brought by Maryland legislation as well as the Affordable Care Act, abortion remains inaccessible to many due to the potentially high out-of-pocket costs. Cost is a major barrier for those who are uninsured and for undocumented immigrants who are not eligible for Medicaid. The effect of abortion restrictions and bans will fall hardest on people who already face significant barriers to health care, including people working to make ends meet, young people, LGBTQ+ people, and Black, Indigenous, and other people of color. Abortion care and services must remain protected in Baltimore City and across the state of Maryland. Through publicly-accessible reproductive health clinics, abortion must remain part of non-directive, medically accurate pregnancy options counseling and must be accessible to all who need abortion services.

As a Title X funded clinic, BCHD cannot legally provide abortion services in our clinics. However, we do provide information and referral for abortion care to clients who are pregnant and desire termination. We include non-biased information about abortion in our options counseling to women who are pregnant and desire such information in addition to information and referral to prenatal care and/or adoption services. Our abortion education materials include contact information for all local abortion providers in addition to information on different types of abortions.

If you or someone you know are looking for abortion services, consider these resources:

- Abortion Finder: <https://www.abortionfinder.org/>
- Hey Jane: <https://www.heyjane.co/>
- Plan C Pill: <https://www.plancpills.org/>
- Repro Legal Hotline: <https://www.reprolegalhelpline.org/>

For Maryland residents seeking financial support to access an abortion, consider the following resources:

- Baltimore Abortion Fund: <https://www.baltimoreabortionfund.org/>
- Planned Parenthood of Maryland and the June Coleman Fund: <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-maryland/get-involved-locally/donate/abortion-loan-fund>
- National Network of Abortion Funds: <https://abortionfunds.org/>

For the reasons noted above, BCHD urges a **favorable** report on Council Bill #22-0110R.