
BILL NO: House Bill 1227
TITLE: Abortion – Ultrasound Requirement
COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations
HEARING DATE: March 13, 2020
POSITION: **OPPOSE**

House Bill 1227 would be a of burden on women and abortion providers by requiring women to view an ultrasound and listen to the heartbeat of the fetus; mandating a litany of reporting requirements, among others. The bill provides exceptions only for medical emergencies.

The Women’s Law Center opposes HB 1227 because it unnecessarily interferes with communication that should be between a doctor and a patient, imposes undue burdens on a woman’s right to access abortion, and disregards the bodily and intellectual autonomy of women. These decisions should not be governed by politics, and this bill is self-evidently political in nature, evidenced by the “whereas” clauses that precede the bill language.

This legislation gives no consideration to individual patients’ medical circumstances or their reason for choosing to terminate the pregnancy. A woman and her health care provider need to have open communication free from political interference. Decisions about abortion need to be based on individual patient circumstances.

Requiring a provider to perform an ultrasound and also to detect fetal heartbeats – not withstanding a woman’s ability set forth in the statute to turn away or refuse to listen – serves no medical purpose. In addition, a January 2014 study printed in the *Obstetrics and Gynecology Journal* also showed that viewing ultrasounds has little impact on changing a woman’s mind. According to the study, just over 40 percent of women chose to view their ultrasound. This legislation targets Maryland abortion providers for additional requirements that are not imposed on any other medical procedure or specialty and is clearly politically motivated, not motivated by a desire to protect the health and well-being of women in this situation. Let the doctor and patient have open communication free from interference and as the doctor and patient decide.

The requirements set forth in HB 1227 are not tied to any medical purpose, nor are they aimed at ensuring women are provided necessary medical information. Rather, whether intentionally or not, the results of this legislation would create a negative, undue burden upon a woman’s ability to access to abortion. For these reasons, the Women’s Law Center urges an unfavorable report on House Bill 1227.

The Women’s Law Center of Maryland is a private, non-profit, membership organization that serves as a leading voice for justice and fairness for women. It advocates for the rights of women through legal assistance to individuals and strategic initiatives to achieve systemic change. The Women’s Law Center operates hotlines, Protection Order Advocacy and Representation Projects in Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Carroll County, and the Multi-Ethnic Domestic Violence Project.