



The Maryland House of Delegates

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB 1321- Health- Abortions- Reporting Requirements

Madam Chair Pendergrass, Vice Chair Pena-Melnyk, and members of the HGO committee,

I come before you today to present House Bill 1321 and ask for you to give it a favorable report.

Gastroschisis is a birth defect of the abdominal wall where a baby's intestines are found outside of the baby's body, exiting through a hole beside the belly button. The hole can be small or large and sometimes other organs, such as the stomach and liver, can also be found outside of the baby's body. As of 2015, this condition is estimated to affect about 2 to 5 per 10,000 newborns. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that there are about 1,871 babies born with Gastroschisis in the United States each year. The most important piece to the care of these venerable babies is early assessment, via Sonogram imaging, to diagnose their condition which allows hospital staff to prepare for intervention upon delivery. This requires both specialized and primary care personnel upon delivery to perform surgery to correct to avoid future complications.

While the exact cause is unknown, the most likely explanation is that Gastroschisis could be caused by genes and environmental factors acting together causing the abnormality.

Understanding the factors that are more common among babies with birth defects in addition to the number of children diagnosed, either upon birth or at the time of abortion, will help us learn more about the causes.

The purpose of this legislation is to require facilities where abortions are performed to report annually the rate of Gastroschisis in aborted fetuses to the Maryland Department of Health. In doing so, health officials would be able to analyze the data to spot trends or pockets where there may be environmental factors such as contaminated water supplies, landfill sites, or other harmful environmental factors that could potentially cause this defect in babies. This information would be vital for early intervention as well as mitigation for such environmental hazards.

In 2017, 29,800 abortions were performed in Maryland. While I am not personally condoning abortion, I am hopeful that the loss of life that has occurred can be beneficial in saving the lives of other babies.