

NICOLE A. WILLIAMS, ESQ.
Legislative District 22
Prince George's County

Judiciary Committee

Chair, Public Safety Subcommittee

Vice Chair, Democratic Caucus

Chair, Prince George's
County House Delegation



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 1, 2024

The Honorable Joseline Pena-Melnyk

Chair of the House Health and Government Operations Committee

6 Bladen Street, Room 241

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

House Bill 1171

Good afternoon, Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and the members of the House Health and Government Operations Committee. I am Delegate Nicole Williams from District 22, and I am testifying in favor of House Bill 1171, also known as **Nonprescription Drugs and Devices – Provision by Registered Nurses and Sale of Contraceptives Through Automatic Devices**. This legislation would remove the criminal penalties for certain types of contraceptives to be sold or dispensed through the use of vending machines or other automatic devices and remove the criminal penalties for dispensing contraception in vending machines in our schools. This doesn't mean that now all of a sudden, all of the schools will have vending machines, but it does mean that if one is installed, it is no longer a crime. Additionally, this bill would allow a registered nurse to provide nonprescription contraceptives and devices to patients under specific circumstances.

Contraceptive vending machines allow twenty-four-hour access to healthcare necessities. This allows individuals to receive contraceptive devices whenever they desire them. Increased access to birth control measures will enforce the safety of individuals and help decrease the rate of unwanted pregnancies and the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases. According to data from the Guttmacher Institute, an organization dedicated to reproductive health policy research, nearly 5% of all pregnancies in the United States are unintended. In 2021, around 70,000 babies were born in the state of Maryland. This means that around 3,500 of the babies born in Maryland in 2021 were unintended pregnancies. However, this large amount of accidental pregnancies could be assuaged by increasing access to birth control measures.

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Many individuals in Maryland lack access to healthcare providers. Allowing all forms of birth control to be obtained through vending machines, decreases the limitations to access. This would help assuage their disadvantage in healthcare by allowing all people access to contraceptives.

Many universities from 17 different states have implemented contraceptive vending machines. This has positively impacted the campuses by providing an efficient way for students to purchase birth control. While undergoing education, many students do not have the financial means or time commitment dedicated to taking care of a child from an unplanned pregnancy. The forms of birth control that are sold in these vending machines are legal and would not cause any physical harm to individuals. Moreover, obtaining these contraceptive items through vending machines would help minors as well. Many minors sometimes fear discussing a desire for birth control with their parents or guardians. Allowing the ability to have vending machines would allow these conversations to be avoided and minors to receive the contraception they need on their own. Allowing vending machines to dispense all forms of contraception, may improve the stressors of young adults and maintain their overall well-being.

For these reasons, I urge this committee to give a favorable report on House Bill 1171.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nicole Williams', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Delegate Nicole A. Williams, Esq.