

Vote No: Abortion Ballot Initiative

What to Know about the Right to Reproductive Freedom Amendment | 2024

What is the Maryland abortion ballot initiative?

The Right to Reproductive Freedom Amendment is a ballot proposal that, if passed, would enshrine abortion in the Maryland constitution. It will be on the ballot in November 2024.

What would the constitutional amendment do?

This amendment would chill healthcare access for women in Maryland; bar or hinder some of women's personal decisions for their pregnancy, including access to abortion pill reversal; and take away the flexibility to craft and update laws that serve the needs of Marylanders, such as safeguards for women's health.

Would abortion be legal in Maryland without a constitutional amendment?

Yes, unfortunately, Maryland already is one of the most progressive states when it comes to abortion access.

Our state has very few protections in place. Abortion is legal through all nine months. Minors can have an abortion without parental consent and the parental notification law has numerous exceptions.

For example, parents don't need to be told their child is having an abortion if the person performing the abortion decides a minor has the maturity to make the decision herself.

Why is a constitutional amendment on abortion bad policy for Maryland?

Enshrining abortion in the constitution will divert attention and resources from efforts that promote women's well-being and address root causes that lead to abortions such as social and economic inequalities.

We need to ensure access to resources and support services for pregnant women and mothers, including healthcare, childcare, education and economic assistance.

It is essential that we create a culture of empathy and solidarity where women feel supported and respected.

How would a state constitutional amendment affect legislative flexibility?

The Maryland constitutional abortion amendment would limit the ability of our lawmakers to respond to changing circumstances or information because an amendment has higher status than a law.

What about protections for healthcare providers?

The constitutional amendment on abortion also could have legal consequences regarding existing protections for religious freedom and the right of healthcare providers to practice according to beliefs.

How is a Maryland constitutional amendment different than a statute, or law?

A statute is a law enacted by the state legislature. It can be amended, repealed or replaced by the legislature as circumstances change in the state.

A constitutional amendment is a change or addition to the state's constitution. It is a permanent alteration to the fundamental framework of our state's legal system and holds a higher status than a statute.

Enacting a constitutional amendment typically requires a more rigorous process for approval, involving multiple steps such as approval by the legislature and ratification by voters through a referendum.

An amendment is much less flexible than a statute because it can be altered or repealed only through another constitutional amendment process.



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Protect Women: Vote No

A message from the Catholic Bishops of Maryland | 2024

This November voters across the country will cast their ballots in national and local elections. Maryland is one of several states that will ask voters to enshrine abortion into their state constitution.

This is an important time for us to reiterate our commitment to the protection of all human life. We oppose the “Right to Reproductive Freedom Amendment” as it contradicts the fundamental principles of respect for human dignity and the inherent right to life.

Our opposition to this initiative is rooted in our unwavering concern for the well-being of women and children. Abortion not only ends the life of an innocent child but also poses significant risks to the physical, emotional and spiritual health of women.

Perpetuates Throwaway Culture

Enshrining abortion into Maryland’s constitution would further perpetuate a “throwaway” culture that devalues human life and fails to provide adequate support and alternatives for women facing difficult decisions regarding their pregnancies.

Pope Francis consistently reminds us that “...people are never to be thrown out. The disadvantaged cannot be thrown away. Every person is a sacred and unique gift, no matter what their age or condition is. Let us always respect and promote life! Let us not throw life away.”

Diverss Resources from Women’s Well-being

Enshrining abortion in the constitution would divert attention and resources away from broader efforts to promote women’s well-being and address the root causes of abortion. Instead of a sole focus on access to abortion, it is necessary to advocate for comprehensive solutions that provide women with access to healthcare, resources for families, and education and job opportunities.

We must foster a culture of life where every person is valued and supported, and where women facing difficult decisions regarding pregnancy and parenthood feel respected and empowered.

Risks Healthcare Worker Rights

By enshrining abortion in the constitution, we risk undermining existing protections for religious freedom, conscience rights, and the rights of healthcare providers to practice according to their beliefs.

Limits Ability to Respond to Needs

A constitutional amendment severely limits legislative flexibility and prevents elected officials from enacting laws that respond to changing circumstances or new evidence related to abortion policy and the protection of women.

The unfortunate reality is that nothing regarding abortion in Maryland would change if this amendment were defeated. Sadly, Maryland has some of the most permissive abortion laws in the country, allowing for abortion at any stage of pregnancy, including right up to the moment of birth.

Reject Ballot Initiative

We stand in solidarity with women and children, and we reject the notion that abortion is a solution to the challenges faced by women in crisis situations. It is essential that we pursue solutions that include compassionate support, resources, and alternatives to abortion for women facing difficult circumstances.

We urge voters to reject this ballot initiative and stand with us in upholding the sanctity of all human life, safeguarding conscience rights, and standing in solidarity with women and children in need. Together, let us work towards building a culture of life in which every person is valued, cherished and protected.

Most Reverend William E. Lori
Archbishop of Baltimore

Wilton Cardinal Gregory
Archbishop of Washington

Most Reverend William Koenig
Bishop of Wilmington

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