***Question 1- Constitutional Amendment (Ch. 245 of the 2023 Legislative Session) Declaration of Rights - Right To Reproductive Freedom***

*The proposed amendment confirms an individual's fundamental right to reproductive freedom, including but not limited to the ability to make and effectuate decisions to prevent, continue, or end the individual's pregnancy, and provides the State may not, directly or indirectly, deny, burden, or abridge the right unless justified by a compelling State interest achieved by the least restrictive means.*

*(Adding Article 48 to the Maryland Declaration of Rights)*

**What is “reproductive freedom”?**

“Reproductive freedom” is not defined in SB798 or HB705 (MGA 2024) or anywhere else. It could allow the following:

* Abortion until birth, irrespective of viability (generally accepted to be about 26 weeks)
* Intentionally denying lifesaving care to a baby born alive as the result of a botched abortion
* Surgery or chemical treatment to alter or remove sexual anatomy for the purpose of gender transition (leaving the person unable to reproduce)
* Conflict with existing health and safety laws
* Silencing of anti-abortion voices
* Invalidating “rights of conscience” laws
* Unknowns -- depending on who is granted the authority to decide.

**We do NOT need a Right to *Reproductive Freedom Amendment* to the Maryland Constitution.**

The right to an abortion has been Maryland law since 1992. Maryland does not require counseling or a waiting period. Abortion is legal without question through 26 weeks and available until birth to protect the mother’s health. If you are under the age of 18, a parent or guardian must be notified beforehand – but a licensed medical doctor can waive that requirement.

**Why is this proposed Constitutional amendment on the ballot?**

The obvious answer is, first and foremost, to remove the requirement for parental knowledge and consent for those under age 18.

Secondly, once incorporated into the Declaration of Rights of the Maryland Constitution, any change will require legislative action, the Governor’s approval, and another amendment to the Maryland Constitution voted on by all Maryland voters. There will be no opportunity to “tweak the law” as happens so often when legislation is implemented, when unforeseen difficulties of implementation require additional action.

**What can you do?**

* Vote AGAINST Question 1- Constitutional Amendment (Ch. 245 of the 2023 Legislative Session) Declaration of Rights - Right To Reproductive Freedom
* Share these concerns with others – friends, family, acquaintances, etc.
* Share concerns on Facebook and other social media
* Share links to additional online sources:
	+ <http://www.healthnotharmmd.org> – Marylanders for Health Not Harm
	+ <https://www.mdrtl.org> – Maryland Right to Life
	+ <http://www.mdcatholic.org> – Maryland Catholic Conference
* Utilize resources on the MFRW website -- <https://mfrw.org/issues-research/>
	+ Call to Action
	+ “Vote Against…” handout
	+ Sample Letter to the Editor
	+ Senate Bill 798
* Print and distribute resource documents at County fairs, church, and community events
* Submit Letters to the Editor to newspapers and electronic news outlets
* Call in to Talk Radio

**Now is the time to act!**

Each Board of Elections must transmit mail-in ballots to voters

no later than Monday, September 23rd.