

SENATE BILL 798

J1

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

3lr2986
CF HB 705

By: **Senators Ferguson, Hettleman, Lam, Hester, Waldstreicher, Carter, James, M. Washington, Gile, Kagan, King, Kramer, Feldman, Lewis Young, Watson, Beidle, Guzzone, Elfreth, Smith, and Zucker**

Introduced and read first time: February 6, 2023

Assigned to: Finance

Committee Report: Favorable

Senate action: Adopted

Read second time: March 4, 2023

CHAPTER _____

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Declaration of Rights – Right to Reproductive Freedom**

3 FOR the purpose of establishing that every person, as a central component of an
4 individual's rights to liberty and equality, has the fundamental right to reproductive
5 freedom; and prohibiting the State from, directly or indirectly, denying, burdening,
6 or abridging the right unless justified by a compelling State interest achieved by the
7 least restrictive means.

8 BY proposing an addition to the Maryland Constitution

9 Declaration of Rights

10 Article 48

11 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
12 (Three-fifths of all the members elected to each of the two Houses concurring), That it be
13 proposed that the Maryland Constitution read as follows:

14 **Declaration of Rights**

15 **ARTICLE 48.**

16 **THAT EVERY PERSON, AS A CENTRAL COMPONENT OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S**
17 **RIGHTS TO LIBERTY AND EQUALITY, HAS THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT TO**
18 **REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO THE ABILITY TO MAKE**

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.



1 AND EFFECTUATE DECISIONS TO PREVENT, CONTINUE, OR END ONE’S OWN
2 PREGNANCY. THE STATE MAY NOT, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, DENY, BURDEN, OR
3 ABRIDGE THE RIGHT UNLESS JUSTIFIED BY A COMPELLING STATE INTEREST
4 ACHIEVED BY THE LEAST RESTRICTIVE MEANS.

5 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That the General Assembly
6 determines that the amendment to the Maryland Constitution proposed by Section 1 of this
7 Act affects multiple jurisdictions and that the provisions of Article XIV, § 1 of the Maryland
8 Constitution concerning local approval of constitutional amendments do not apply.

9 SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That:

10 (a) The amendment to the Maryland Constitution proposed by Section 1 of this
11 Act shall be submitted to the qualified voters of the State at the next general election to be
12 held in November 2024 for adoption or rejection pursuant to Article XIV of the Maryland
13 Constitution.

14 (b) (1) At that general election, the vote on the proposed amendment to the
15 Constitution shall be by ballot, and on each ballot there shall be printed the words “For the
16 Constitutional Amendment” and “Against the Constitutional Amendment”, as now
17 provided by law.

18 (2) At that general election, a question substantially similar to the
19 following shall be submitted to the qualified voters of the State:

20 “Question ____ Constitutional Amendment

21 The proposed amendment confirms an individual’s fundamental right to an individual’s
22 own reproductive liberty and provides the State may not, directly or indirectly, deny,
23 burden, or abridge the right unless justified by a compelling State interest achieved by the
24 least restrictive means.”.

25 (c) Immediately after the election, all returns shall be made to the Governor of
26 the vote for and against the proposed amendment, as directed by Article XIV of the
27 Maryland Constitution, and further proceedings had in accordance with Article XIV.