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February 4, 2020

The Honorable William C. Ferguson IV, President
Maryland State Senate
State House, H-107
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Senator Ferguson,

I write today to express our opposition to an Amendment to the Maryland State Constitution which would require unfettered access to abortion services.

Our new organization has the formal backing of over 1000 traditional, Orthodox Rabbis in matters of public policy, but in reality we take positions where we believe the Torah mandates a particular view, and that the overwhelming consensus of America's rabbis is with us. Contrary to what you may have heard, the vast majority of America's rabbis are Orthodox and deeply traditional, and this is certainly true in the State of Maryland.

Thomas Jefferson, in his first Inaugural Address, stated as follows:

"Bear in mind this sacred principle, that though the will of the majority is in all cases to prevail, that will, to be rightful, must be reasonable; that the minority possess their equal rights, which equal laws must protect, and to violate would be oppression."

Abortion is a deeply controversial issue with significant ramifications for all citizens; it is not merely a matter of personal choice. This is not to say that unfettered personal choice is an American value – we involuntarily restrain individuals attempting suicide, for example – but many Marylanders, including all those who observe traditional Judaism, acknowledge that a fetus is a second, independent person whose rights must also be considered.

To ensconce abortion as a right in the Maryland Constitution would trample the views and values of Marylanders who regard abortion as an abhorrent practice, better left with its partner, infanticide, in the annals of history. Medical science has long since proven that a fetus has independent thought and recollection, able to recognize his or her mother's heartbeat and even parents' voices throughout his or her lifetime.

The Babylonian Talmud records by name only the truly elite sages of its time. One of these is Rabbi Mahri, grandson of the Dean of one of the two Babylonian Rabbinic Academies.

History records that he was the product of a rape: his mother Rachel was kidnapped, and impregnated before her release from captivity. His mother did not seek to abort her pregnancy, or to leave her young child to die (as was a common practice in many of the world's leading cultures of that era). Rather, she ensured his education, and he grew up to make such a lasting contribution that his words are studied over 1000 years later.

For further information on the Jewish attitude towards abortion found in our tradition, I have enclosed [our position paper](#) on the subject. Please consider it carefully, along with the opinion of all those who acknowledge the inestimable value of every human life, and please decline to forward an Amendment which would permanently make the State Constitution itself a divisive document for Marylanders, rather than one which unites us in seeking a better society.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Yaakov Menken". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "Y" and "M".

Rabbi Yaakov Menken
Managing Director