

Committees: Appropriations

Testimony on: HB356

Position: Favorable

10 February 2023

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and the members of the Appropriations Committee,

The University of Maryland, Student Government Association supports HB356 in requiring public higher education institutions to adopt a non-discrimination policy that protects pregnant and parenting individuals. This bill is significant because it ensures equity for Maryland's college students in such a way that aligns with that Title IX of the Federal Higher Education Act.

Title IX policies have created established protections for pregnant and parenting individuals. As Director of Sexual Misconduct Prevention at the University of Maryland's Student Government Association and as Director of the Title IX Advisory Board I am well versed in the functions of the Title IX office and students' knowledge of the office's policies. Through my positions and conversations with the greater student body, I can attest that many students are unaware of the protections they are afforded under Title IX. Pregnant and parenting individuals are already faced with significant stress. If subject to discrimination or harassment, which is highly probable considering historic discrimination surrounding pregnant and parenting individuals, these individuals need not face additional stress in locating their rights.

HB356 would simplify the process of helping pregnant and parenting individuals in locating their rights by requiring that public institutions ensure that their policy is consistent with Title IX regulations and that the policy is included on the institution's website. If these individuals feel they have been denied equal treatment and equal opportunity based on their pregnancy and parental status, the institution's policy would logically be the first thing the individual consults. Individuals who are unaware of their Title IX protections should not be disadvantaged in seeking support and exploring their rights. The institution has an obligation to provide students with the full extent of their policies. Pregnant and parenting individuals should have equal access to understanding their rights at their institution as individuals facing other forms of discrimination and harassment.

I respectfully request a favorable vote on HB365.

Thank you,



*Aadhiti Vallatharasu, Student Government Association, Director of Sexual Misconduct Prevention Committee
University of Maryland — College Park, MD
avallath@terpmail.umd.edu*

*Caroline Thorne, Student Government Association, Director of Government Affairs
University of Maryland – College Park, MD
cthorne@terpmail.umd.edu*