

**ANNE HEALEY**  
*Legislative District 22*  
Prince George's County

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*Chair*  
Rules and Executive  
Nominations Committee

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Environment and Transportation  
Committee

*Chair*  
Local Government and  
Bi-County Issues Subcommittee



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**Sponsor Testimony HB 356 – Public Institutions of Higher Education –  
Pregnant and Parenting Students – Policy  
February 14, 2023  
Appropriations Committee**

Chair Barnes and Committee,

For the record, I am Delegate Anne Healey here to present HB 356 - Public Institutions of Higher Education – Pregnant and Parenting Students – Policy. This bill passed through the Appropriations Committee and through the House with a vote of 132 -1, but never received a vote in the Senate.

HB 356 codifies in Maryland law the benefits of the federal Title IX protections for women in higher education to ensure that parenting and pregnant students do not lose their educational opportunities because of discriminatory institutional practices. The bill is modeled on a similar law which was passed in California in 2019.

The bill before you requires institutions of higher learning to maintain a policy related to pregnant and parenting students that is consistent with federal Title IX, which prevents higher education institutions from forcing pregnant or parenting students to withdraw or limit studies. Federal Title IX requires institutions to allow pregnant or parenting students to take a leave of absence and return in good academic standing.

For pregnant students, leave would be no less than 12 months, unless student requests shorter leave period. Leave would include time to prepare and return to class/exams. Leave could be extended if medically necessary. For the non-birth parent, leave would be no less than 1 month unless student requests shorter time or a medical extension is needed. It also requires higher education institutions to publicize the rights of pregnant and parenting students and to make reasonable accommodations for pregnant students. Reasonable accommodations include allowing students to make up tests and assignments if missed for pregnancy-related reasons and allowing medically excused absences. Also required are other accommodations, such as private space for lactation that is not a bathroom or closet.

While Title IX does a lot of good already, **codifying it at the state level will assure that these rights do not disappear if federal law changes.** In fact, these protections are already in place in most Maryland Higher Education Institutions.

Following is some helpful background collected last year by supporters of this bill:

- In Maryland, several colleges do not list the Title IX rights of pregnant and parenting students on their website. But there are 55,000 student parents in Maryland (nearly 20 percent of all undergrads in MD) who would benefit from knowing their rights. They are more likely to drop out of college without these supports, and they might drop out just because they don't know their rights.
- Just 8% of single mother undergraduates will earn an AA or BA within six years of college enrollment (compared with 49% of non-mothers). And there are 26,000 single mother students currently in MD

- 80% of Maryland public universities do not offer childcare on campus, and more than half provide no lactation spaces for breastfeeding mothers.
- Federal law already requires a lactation room be available for employees, so just extending that same space or a similar accommodation to lactating students would help.