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BILL NO.: House Bill 477  
TITLE: Public Senior Higher Education Institutions - Reproductive Health Services Plans - Requirements  
COMMITTEE: Health & Government Operations  
DATE: February 14, 2023  
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

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Many college campuses have little to no access to essential reproductive healthcare resources. In cases of sexual assault, unprotected or coerced sex, and failed birth control, on campus access to emergency contraception and medicated abortion is an important way for students to maintain bodily autonomy and prevent unwanted pregnancy in a timely and private manner. Access off campus presents barriers such as limited health center pharmacy hours, transportation challenges, high pharmacy costs, pharmacies not stocking EC on the shelf, enforcing outdated age restrictions, or refusing to sell EC outright. For many students, seeing a provider, accessing trusted information, and finding the right birth control could mean missed classes, time off from work, hours on public transportation and an onerous medical bill.

Limited access to contraception, safe abortions, and other reproductive healthcare services is not only detrimental to educational success, but also promotes systemic inequality since the people who are most at risk for dropping out of college—low-income Americans and racial minorities—are also the ones who are most likely to unexpectedly become pregnant at an early age.

HB477 will require that public 4-year colleges and universities provide 24-hour access to over-the-counter contraception on campus through student health centers, retail outlets on campus, and/or vending machines, provide or refer for a full range of reproductive health services, and prepare and submit an annual reproductive health access plan, in consultation with students, to the Maryland Higher Education Commission. The WLC understands that there are friendly amendments proposed by the sponsor to accommodate the needs of certain universities, including virtual campuses, and supports those amendments.

Because access to a full spectrum of reproductive health is essential for the health, well-being, and success of college students, the WLC urges a favorable report on HB477.

*The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a private, non-profit, legal services organization that serves as a leading voice for justice and fairness for women. It advocates for the rights of women through legal assistance to individuals and strategic initiatives to achieve systemic change, working to ensure physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy for women in Maryland.*