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HB477

February 14, 2023

TO: Appropriations Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Interim Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: House Bill 477 – Public Senior Higher Education Institutions – Reproductive Health Services Plans – Requirements

POSITION: Support

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 477.

This bill would require public senior higher education institutions to collaborate with students on developing and implementing reproductive health services plans with optional assistance from the Maryland Department of Health. Students enter senior higher institutions of learning from various backgrounds – some straight from high school – who have a high need for reproductive health services. Many of these students have low levels of sexual and reproductive health knowledge and will need access to comprehensive reproductive health services. Access to these services can affect students' ability to persist in and successfully compete in educational programs.

There has always been a discrepancy between young people's desire to avoid pregnancy and their knowledge and ability to successfully do so. Having reproductive health services available creates an opportunity to fill gaps in services and education. This bill presents a unique opportunity for students to not only share information about reproductive health services, but also to set the tone on their campuses, in their classrooms, and amongst their peers that reproductive health is an essential component of student success.

Without access to testing and treatment, college students are at risk for several adverse sexual and reproductive health outcomes. Research suggests that college students may also be considerably more likely to experience sexual assault and intimate partner violence.¹ This fact increases the need for access to reproductive health services at institutions of senior higher education.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on HB047.

¹ Scull, T. M. (2019). *The Understudied Half of Undergraduates: Risky Sexual Behaviors among Community College Students*. Journal of American College Health.