

**Testimony in Support of HB 771 & SB 741
Pregnant and Parenting Support Act**

Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Walter Stone Sanders, and I am proud to say that I was born and raised in Baltimore. As a former NFL player for the Baltimore Ravens, a firefighter for Baltimore County, and currently a professional boxer, I have dedicated my life to serving my community and pursuing my dreams. However, my most important role is that of a father to my two beautiful daughters.

I come before you today to share my story as a young, poor, but gifted student who faced the challenges of balancing education and fatherhood. As a first-time father during my sophomore year at Saint Augustine University, I found myself grappling with the overwhelming responsibilities of parenthood while striving to excel in my studies and athletics.

The birth of my daughter was a pivotal moment in my life—a moment that transformed me from a carefree college student into a determined father with a renewed sense of purpose. I vividly recall the struggles of driving hours home twice a month, unable to afford childcare and after-school programming for my child. Despite these challenges, I remained steadfast in my commitment to both my education and my role as a father.

While I cherished the opportunity to pursue my passion for football and later transition into a career as a professional boxer, I couldn't help but recognize how having access to resources could have alleviated some of the burdens I faced as a student parent. Resources such as affordable childcare and after-school programs would have allowed me to focus more on my studies and spend quality time with my daughter.

House Bill 771|Senate Bill 741, the Pregnant and Parenting Support Act, strikes a chord with me on a deeply personal level. This legislation recognizes the struggles faced by student parents like myself and seeks to provide them with the support they need to succeed academically while fulfilling their parental responsibilities. By offering information on funding opportunities and making accommodations for classes and resources, this bill acknowledges the importance of education in shaping the future of families like mine.

I urge you to support House Bill 771|Senate Bill 741 and help create a more inclusive and supportive environment for student parents across our state. Thank you for considering my testimony and for your commitment to addressing the needs of pregnant and parenting students.

Sincerely,

Walter Stone Sanders