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Delegate Ben Barnes
Appropriations Committee
Maryland State Legislature
House Office Building
Room 121
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Subject: Testimony in Support of House Bill 0298 – Maryland Higher Education Commission – Demographic Data Collection – Parental Status

Dear Delegate Ben Barnes and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

As a student parent from Frederick County MD, I am writing to express my strong support for HB 0298, which mandates the collection of data on the parental status of college students in Maryland. With one in five undergraduate students and one in three graduate students nationwide balancing academics and parenting, better data collection is a crucial step toward improving college completion rates for this group.

Comprehensive data collection will enable policymakers and institutional leaders to identify and address barriers faced by student parents. These barriers, often rooted in racial and economic disparities, hinder academic success. Supporting student parents is both a matter of equity and a key strategy for achieving Maryland's retention and graduation goals for students of color and Pell-eligible students.

The 2023 Maryland Higher Education Commission [Report on Advising Systems and Wrap-around Services](#) revealed that few institutions collect comprehensive data on student parents. Without accurate information, it's impossible to fully understand their needs or craft policies that promote their success.

I am writing to you today not only as a constituent but as a determined and resilient single mother, a nursing student, and an advocate for those who, like me, are fighting every day to build a better future for themselves and their children.

I am a 37-year-old single parent to a six-year-old daughter, currently finishing my last semester in the RN program at Frederick Community College. My journey has been anything but easy. I entered this program as a newly single parent, after my child's father was tragically murdered. I had to navigate unimaginable loss while picking up the pieces for my daughter and myself. The struggles I have faced—financial hardship, limited childcare, and the emotional toll of single parenthood—are not unique to me. They are the struggles of countless other parents in our community who are simply trying to survive while striving for success.

However, despite these challenges, I have persevered. Through tears, exhaustion, and uncertainty, I have pushed forward because I refuse to be another statistic. I refuse to be trapped in a system that sees me as just another number rather than a person striving to give back to my community as a future nurse. But right now, my ability—and the ability of many others—to continue this fight is under direct threat.

As of May 16, 2025, Frederick Community College's Carl and Norma Miller Children's Center, which has provided critical childcare support for students like myself, will be permanently closing due to fiscal challenges in higher education. This is not just a disappointment—it is a devastating loss for single parents like me who rely on accessible childcare to complete our education. The center not only provided care but also scholarship opportunities that helped alleviate the financial burden. Without it, many of us are left with impossible choices: pause or abandon our education, struggle to find expensive and scarce childcare, or risk losing everything we have fought so hard for.

I have personally worked to increase awareness of scholarship opportunities for students, speaking to donors on behalf of my college. I have sought every resource available, yet I still find myself in a situation where I rely on my 91-year-old grandmother to take my child to school on clinical days because there are simply no other viable options. This is the reality that single parents in higher education face—juggling overwhelming responsibilities with little institutional support, all while trying to break the cycle of poverty and build a better future for our families.

I am asking you—please fight for us. Please hear our voices. Single parents who are striving to enter essential professions like nursing need and deserve support. We want to contribute to our communities, we want to be independent, and we want to provide stability and hope for our children. But we cannot do this alone.

We need policies that protect and expand access to affordable childcare for student-parents. We need increased funding for programs that provide scholarships and resources for those pursuing higher education while raising children. We need our leaders to recognize that when they invest in single parents, they are investing in stronger families, a stronger workforce, and a stronger community.

No one would know we exist if not for demographic statistics and data collection. But we are here, and we are fighting. We are working tirelessly to rise above our circumstances, but we need your support to make it to the finish line. Please do not let our struggles go unheard. Stand with us, advocate for us, and help create the opportunities that will allow us to succeed.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to serving our community. I look forward to your response and any steps you can take to support single parents who are pursuing higher education.

Passing HB 0298 will ensure Maryland has the tools to support its estimated 70,000 student parents, empowering them to thrive in higher education and beyond. By addressing their unique challenges, Maryland can be a leader in fostering student success and equity in higher education.

I respectfully urge the Appropriations Committee to support HB 0298 and take this vital step toward creating a more inclusive and supportive educational environment for student parents.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Amy L. Anderson

