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TESTIMONY ON HB#/0298 - POSITION: FAVORABLE

Maryland Higher Education Commission - Demographic Data Collection - Parental Status

TO: Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang and members of the Appropriations Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#/0298, Maryland Higher Education Commission - Demographic Data Collection - Parental Status

The purpose of this bill is to mandate data collection to determine how parents in attendance at institutions of higher education in Maryland are being served and data about the populations affected.

As documented by the American Council on Education: ¹

Despite incomplete data, we know student-parents often face significant obstacles in their pursuit of higher education, including financial challenges, time poverty (i.e., a lack of time to attend to parental, educational, and personal responsibilities), and negative interactions with higher education constructs and institutional actors and constructs (e.g., policies and practices). These challenges all contribute to student-parents' low persistence and degree acquisition rate compared to that of nonparenting students (Short et al. 2022; Cruse et al. 2019; Jez 2023). Only 18 percent of student-parents receive a bachelor's or associate degree within six years of study compared with 27 percent of independent and 54 percent of dependent or traditionally aged (i.e., between 18 and 24 years old), nonparenting students (Cruse et al. 2021). In other words, student-parents are nearly twice as likely to withdraw from higher education without a postsecondary degree as students without children (Hicks and Anderson 2024).

This bill requires the Maryland Higher Education Commission to collect certain data regarding the parental status of students from each public institution of higher education in the State using questions developed by the Commission and the institutions. It then requires public institutions of higher education to collect and report certain demographic data from students. This data collected will be mandated for the Commission to report to certain committees of the General Assembly by September 1, 2026, and each September 1 thereafter, issuing a report summarizing the data collected.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB#/0298

¹ <https://www.acenet.edu/Documents/Raising-Expectations-Student-Parent-Success.pdf>