

Dr. Lauren Becker-Leiphart
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Delegate Kerr
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,

My name is Dr. Lauren Becker-Leiphart. I am an Education Professor in the Department of Social Science at Frederick Community College. My journey to this position involved my role as a single parent of three children during many years of course work and teaching. Additionally, my extensive 30 year career as a researcher in family literacy allotted me first-hand experience with families across the country who struggle to support their families in order to educate themselves.

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 0298, which seeks to improve data collection on student parents. This legislation is a crucial step toward understanding and addressing the unique challenges faced by student parents while also reinforcing the well-documented benefits of educated parents on their children's academic success.

Student parents represent a significant portion of today's college population, yet they often remain an overlooked demographic in education policy. Collecting comprehensive data on their experiences including barriers to degree completion, access to childcare, and financial stability will enable policymakers and institutions to implement targeted interventions that enhance their success.

Additionally, research consistently shows that when parents pursue higher education, their children benefit academically and socioemotionally. By identifying and analyzing data on student parents, we can develop policies that not only support them in achieving their educational goals but also break cycles of poverty and boost early childhood education outcomes.

I urge you to support this bill and prioritize data-driven solutions that empower student parents and their families. Thank you for your leadership in advancing policies that strengthen educational opportunities for all.

Sincerely,
Dr. Lauren Becker-Leiphart
Assistant Professor, Education
Frederick Community College

