

January 31, 2025

Hon. Benjamin Barnes
Chair, Appropriations Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
Re: Support for House Bill 298

Dear Chair Barnes and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Greater Washington Partnership (the Partnership), I am writing to express our support for HB 298, which would allow for the collection of data on the parental status of college students in Maryland, an essential first step to improving completion rates for students who are balancing caregiving responsibilities while pursuing higher education.

The Partnership is a nonprofit alliance of nearly 50 leading corporate, university, and nonprofit employers in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia committed to championing the region's growth and vitality. Our member organizations represent more than 300,000 employees, and together we leverage our collective resources to identify shared challenges and offer solutions to the region's critical workforce, transportation, and economic development challenges. The Partnership's Skills and Talent Initiative works with the region's educators and employers to strengthen talent pipelines and ensure learners have access to training and jobs that lead to economic mobility. HB 298 is aligned with our goal of fostering a diverse and skilled talent pipeline needed for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

Nationwide, an estimated 1 in 5 undergraduate students and 1 in 3 graduate students are parenting while enrolled in school. Student parents are more likely to be students of color and live at or below the poverty line than their non-parenting peers. Addressing the special needs of student parents improves retention and graduation rates, particularly for Pell-eligible students and students of color.

This legislation would place Maryland at the forefront of procuring comprehensive data to capture the number of parenting students in Maryland, address their experiences, and dismantle obstacles impeding their academic and professional success. This will empower policymakers at every level to make informed decisions and provide targeted support for this often-overlooked population.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB 298. Thank you for your consideration and shared commitment to reducing barriers to economic mobility and opportunity, as well as making this region the best place to live, work, and build a business.

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