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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 citizen of Frederick County, 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.

Although I am not writing this on behalf of Frederick Community College, as an administrator I can attest to the importance of being able to generate reliable student demographic data so we can track performance and build structures and interventions to support their success. As parental status is fluid, we cannot just collect data at the point of institutional onboarding. And as this population of students faces many challenges that impact their ability to succeed, and that student parents are more likely to fall below the ALICE threshold, having accurate data on their status is essential.

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,

Dr. Brian Stipelman