



HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

House Bill 6

Public Institutions of Higher Education - Pregnant and Parenting Students – Plan and Reporting January 27, 2026 Information

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on House Bill 6. The bill directs the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) to collect data from public colleges and universities on students' parental status – including whether they are parents or guardians, age of children, single parenting, or sharing parenting responsibilities – and to standardize and report this information annually beginning September 1, 2027. It also mandates that each public institution adopt and publicly post, by October 1, a Title IX–aligned plan for pregnant and parenting students, including referrals for support services (such as WIC, childcare scholarships, medical assistance, and adoption services), information on institutional accommodations, and links to on- and off-campus health providers. The plan must be accessible online by the stated deadline, and the Commission must implement regulations to ensure uniform data collection and timely reporting.

The USM is comprised of twelve distinguished institutions, and three regional centers. We award eight out of every ten bachelor's degrees in the State. Each of USM's 12 institutions has a distinct and unique approach to the mission of educating students and promoting the economic, intellectual, and cultural growth of its surrounding community. These institutions are located throughout the state, from Western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, with the flagship campus in the Washington suburbs. The USM includes three Historically Black Institutions, comprehensive institutions and research universities, and the country's largest public online institution.

The University System of Maryland (USM) believes equal treatment and support for pregnant and parenting students is critical to ensuring that all female students have equal access to educational opportunities. The campuses that comprise the USM have consistently implemented timely policies to keep these students in school, ensure their children's health – and in the end get closer their diploma and college completion.

House Bill 6 seeks to standardize statewide policies for supporting pregnant and parenting students, including data collection and mandated plans across public institutions. While the intent to provide resources is commendable, these supports are most effective when managed at the campus level, where information can be updated quickly and tailored to individual needs. USM institutions already allow pregnant students to request academic accommodations through designated support offices, addressing circumstances on a case-by-case basis in alignment with ADA requirements. This approach ensures flexibility for the

unique and time-sensitive nature of pregnancy and related conditions, without the administrative delays inherent in statewide policy updates.

The U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights enforces Title IX, which prohibits sex-based discrimination in federally funded education programs and explicitly protects pregnant and parenting students. This includes safeguarding their right to remain enrolled and receive equal access during pregnancy, childbirth, recovery, and related conditions. However, addressing these shortcomings through state-level mandates, may raise questions from student affairs professionals about whether duplicative regulation is the best solution when federal standards already exist. Strengthening awareness and compliance at the institutional level may offer a more agile and effective approach than layering additional mandatory reporting requirements.

The institutions within the USM fully recognize and uphold the rights of pregnant and parenting students under Title IX. Our leadership and staff are deeply committed to supporting these students, not only because it is a legal obligation, but because it aligns with our shared goal of increasing completion rates and fostering student success. Campuses continuously monitor what works, identify barriers, and adapt resources to meet evolving needs throughout the semester. This proactive, student-centered approach ensures that motivated students facing the challenges of parenthood have the support they need to thrive academically and complete their degrees.

The USM appreciates the opportunity to provide this information regarding House Bill 6.

