

# **Testimony in favor of HB006 (Hofmann).pdf**

Uploaded by: Anne Hofmann

Position: FAV

# Favorable Testimony for HB 006

TO: Members of the House Appropriations Committee

FROM: Dr. Anne Hofmann

DATE: January 23, 2026

RE: SUPPORT – HB 006 – Maryland’s Public Institutions of Higher Education - Pregnant and Parenting Students - Plan and Reporting

## **Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in strong favor of HB 006.**

My name is Dr. Anne Hofmann. I am a Professor of English and Cultural Studies at Frederick Community College. I am here today to urge your support for this legislation, which represents a refined and essential evolution in how Maryland supports its student parents.

### **Building on Momentum and Strengthening Accountability**

Last year, this body saw the clear merit in this initiative when it passed the House and nearly cleared the Senate. While it was previously hung up on reporting logistics, we have spent the interim period ensuring this version is ready for implementation.

HB 006 is being reintroduced as a critical amendment to the Pregnant and Parenting Student Support Act of 2025. This version significantly expands what accountability looks like in our state through two vital enhancements:

1. **Universal Support:** It requires *all* public institutions to provide concrete supports for pregnant and parenting students, ensuring that a student’s success doesn’t depend on which zip code or campus they choose.
2. **Data-Driven Success:** it formalizes the data collection necessary to make these students "visible." As we often say in higher education: you cannot support student parents if you do not know who they are.

### **Resolving Past Challenges**

We have addressed the concerns of the previous session by securing MHEC’s support for this bill. We have clarified MHEC's role in ensuring that all data collection meets the highest ethical standards and includes rigorous privacy protections for our families. Furthermore, I want to emphasize that this bill carries no fiscal note. It is a profound policy improvement that provides massive benefits for Maryland families without a direct cost to the taxpayer.

### **The Human and Economic Impact**

The data regarding this population is compelling. It is estimated that 20% of U.S. college students are parenting, and nearly 70% of those at two-year colleges live at or below 200% of poverty (Gault et al 3).

I understand this struggle personally. I earned my PhD at the University of Maryland, College Park, while raising two children as a single mother. It took eight years of navigating a system that offered no targeted support. My own PhD research now proves that while these students face immense financial and psychosocial stress, programmatic interventions—like FCC’s Parents Lead—result in completion rates that exceed the general college-going population. Parenting students are among our most motivated learners; they are working to improve their children’s lives, not just their own.

### **Conclusion**

HB 006 is a necessary component for the successful implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future. By identifying and supporting parenting students, we empower hundreds of Maryland families to earn the credentials required for a living wage.

I testify today without hesitation that this bill is a vital step for equity in our state, and I strongly urge a favorable report.

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NOTE: My testimony does not represent the opinion or viewpoint of Frederick Community College or its leadership; it is provided as a member of the public based on personal expertise and interest.

# **Hb006B.S.Rhymes.pdf**

Uploaded by: Britt Spears-Rhymes

Position: FAV

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January 23, 2026

Delegate Ben Barnes  
Appropriations Committee  
Maryland State Legislature  
House Office Building  
Room 121  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Subject: Testimony in Support of House Bill 006 – Maryland Higher Education  
Commission – Demographic Data Collection – Parental Status

Dear Delegate Ben Barnes and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Britt Spears-Rhymes. I am a higher education professional, critical scholar, and student parent advocate currently working at a national nonprofit that supports student parents. I am also a Maryland resident, a parent of two children, and someone whose personal and professional life is deeply connected to the intent of House Bill 006. This bill builds on the progress made by [House Bill 0840](#), the Pregnant and Parenting Student Support Act, by strengthening implementation and accountability across Maryland's public higher education system.

I am here today in strong support of HB 006.

My connection to this bill began long before my professional career. As an undergraduate at a public HBCU, I unknowingly served as a student parent advocate while helping my fellow college students to coordinate what I now know is a childcare co-op to support my classmates and friends who were student parents in college. At the time, I didn't have the language or data to name what I was seeing—students juggling coursework, parenting responsibilities, and financial strain with little to no institutional support.

That reality became even more personal through my husband, who became a father while he was an undergraduate at an HBCU. Each weekend, he traveled home to parent, returning to

campus with no formal accountability, accommodations, or recognition from the institution. He persisted despite the system, not because of it.

Later, we both became student parents while enrolled in graduate school. Navigating coursework, caregiving, and employment simultaneously made it clear just how invisible student parents often are within higher education systems—especially at advanced levels where support is assumed, but rarely structured.

Now, as a former Maryland state employee in higher education and a national advocate for student parents, I see clearly what I could not then: the absence of data is not neutral—it is harmful.

Nationally, one in five college students is a parent, yet student parents are ten times less likely to graduate, despite often earning higher GPAs than their non-parenting peers. More than half leave college without a degree. These outcomes are not about motivation or ability; they are about systems that fail to see and support this population.

In a state as racially and ethnically diverse as Maryland, we can be certain student parents—especially Black and Latinx student parents—are present across our campuses. What we cannot currently do is accurately count them, understand their needs, or design policies that support their success.

HB 006 gives Maryland the opportunity to change that. By collecting data on student parents, this bill lays the foundation for informed decision-making, equitable resource allocation, and family-friendly policies that strengthen our institutions and our workforce.

I respectfully urge this Committee to pass HB 006—not only for today's student parents, but for the future of higher education in Maryland, including my own children, who may one day attend college in this state.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

*Britt M. Spears-Rhymes*

# **HB 6, Public Institutions of Higher Education, Pre**

Uploaded by: Carlos Orbe, Jr.

Position: FAV

January 23, 2026

The Honorable Ben Barnes

Chair, Appropriations Committee

120 Taylor House Office Building

121 Taylor House Office Building

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support for HB 6, Public Institutions of Higher Education, Pregnant and Parenting Students, Plan and Reporting

Dear Chair Barnes,

Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU) is honored to express our strong support for House Bill 6, Public Institutions of Higher Education, Pregnant and Parenting Students, Plan and Reporting. HB 6 requires the Maryland Higher Education Commission and public institutions of higher education to collect and report data on student parents and to adopt a plan supporting pregnant and parenting students. The bill is scheduled for a hearing in the House Appropriations Committee on January 27, 2026 at 1:00 p.m., and the bill's effective date is July 1, 2026.

Student parents are a major and often invisible segment of higher education. National data from the 2020 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study indicates that about 18 percent of undergraduate students are raising children while enrolled, representing roughly 3.14 million student parents. Yet student parents frequently face structural barriers including lack of child care access, inflexible scheduling, and limited awareness of accommodations. These barriers are especially acute for Latino and immigrant families, many of whom balance work, caregiving, and language access needs while pursuing credentials that improve long term economic mobility.

HB 6 moves Maryland toward evidence driven support by requiring consistent data and a concrete institutional plan. That is essential for equity because what is measured is what is improved. With better data, institutions can identify persistence gaps, target resources, and design supports that make completion attainable for student parents, including those in Latino communities striving to move into higher wage careers.

MLU will support successful implementation by partnering with campuses and community organizations to connect student parents to navigation supports, culturally responsive resources, and community based services. We will also help elevate student parent voices so institutional plans reflect real barriers and practical solutions.

MLU urges the House Appropriations Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 6, reinforcing Maryland's commitment to family economic stability, educational attainment, and equitable opportunity.

Sincerely,

Carlos Orbe, Jr.

Communications and Public Affairs Specialist

Maryland Latinos Unidos

[corbejr@mdlatinosunidos.org](mailto:corbejr@mdlatinosunidos.org)

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**HB0006\_FAV\_MDACOG\_Pub. Institutions Higher Ed. - P**

Uploaded by: Christine Krone

Position: FAV



**Maryland Section**

House Appropriations Committee  
January 27, 2026

House Bill 6 – *Public Institutions of Higher Education – Pregnant and Parenting Students – Plan and Reporting*

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Maryland Section (MD ACOG), which represents the Maryland physicians who serve the obstetrical and gynecological needs of Maryland women and their families, **supports** House Bill 6.

House Bill 6 would require the Maryland Higher Education Commission and public institutions of higher education to collect demographic data on students' parental status and to adopt comprehensive plans to support pregnant and parenting students. This approach aligns with ACOG's commitment to improving maternal and child health outcomes.

Pregnancy and parenting are significant life events with profound health, economic, and educational implications. Students who are pregnant or caring for children often face unique barriers that jeopardize their academic success, economic stability, and health. Pregnant and parenting students often face elevated stress, significant caregiving responsibilities, financial insecurity, and interruptions to their education, which together contribute to lower retention and higher dropout rates than those experienced by their non-parenting peers. Yet, many higher education institutions lack systematic data on the number and needs of these students or formal policies to ensure they can remain enrolled and succeed. Without accurate demographic information and clear institutional plans, the true scope of these challenges remains invisible and under-addressed.

This bill represents an important step toward ensuring that pregnant and parenting students in Maryland's public higher education institutions have the institutional support necessary to remain enrolled, complete their degrees, and care for themselves and their families. For these reasons, MD ACOG respectfully urges the Committee's favorable report on House Bill 6.

**For more information call:**

Christine K. Krone  
J. Steven Wise  
Danna L. Kauffman  
410-244-7000

# Written Testimony HB006.pdf

Uploaded by: Danielle Christenson

Position: FAV



January 23, 2026

Marjorie Sims  
Ascend at the Aspen Institute  
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Marjorie.Sims@aspeninstitute.org

Delegate Ben Barnes  
Appropriations Committee  
Maryland State Legislature  
House Office Building  
Room 121  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Subject: Testimony in Support of House Bill 006 – Maryland Higher Education Commission – Demographic Data Collection – Parental Status

Chairman Barnes and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

[Ascend at the Aspen Institute](#) appreciates the opportunity to submit written testimony in strong support of House Bill 006. This bill builds on the progress made by House Bill 0840, the Pregnant and Parenting Student Support Act, by strengthening implementation and accountability across Maryland’s public higher education system

As a national leader in [two-generation \(2Gen\) approaches](#), Ascend understands that the success of parents and children is inextricably linked. Nationally, 20% of undergraduate and 28% of graduate students are parenting. Despite these numbers, parents remain an "invisible" student population at most postsecondary institutions.

While HB 0840 set important requirements for public senior higher education institutions to develop plans supporting pregnant and parenting students, HB 006 takes the crucial next step by expanding these requirements to all public higher education institutions and requiring the Maryland Higher Education Commission collect consistent data on students' parental status. Simply put, we cannot effectively support student parents if we do not know who they are. HB 006 provides the necessary framework to identify pregnant and parenting students and connect them to the supports already mandated under Maryland law.

According to [national data](#), more than one in five college students is a parent. In Maryland specifically, the estimated number of parenting students is 70,000. Without comprehensive and uniform data collection, institutions and policymakers are limited in their ability to reach these



students, assess whether supports are working, and ensure equitable access to services such as child care, health care, housing stability, and academic accommodations

The need for accurate data collection is underscored by the experience of one of our Parent Advisors, Michaela Martin. As a single mother, Michaela needed child care in order to attend community college. However, her campus had a 2-3 year waitlist for child care services, despite her program lasting only two years. When she brought this issue to the college administration's attention, she was told the college would need data about how many students had children in need of care before any changes could be made. Recognizing the systemic barriers student parents face, Michaela successfully advocated for [Oregon Senate Bill 564](#), passed in 2021, which requires public postsecondary institutions in Oregon to collect and report data on the number of students with children. Her story highlights the urgent need for House Bill 006, as data collection is a foundational step toward implementing policies that truly support student parents.

Passing HB 006 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. Ascend respectfully urges the Appropriations Committee to support HB 006 and take this vital step toward creating a more inclusive and supportive educational environment for student parents.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact Jennifer Poci, Senior Program Manager, [jennifer.pocai@aspeninstitute.org](mailto:jennifer.pocai@aspeninstitute.org), if you have any questions or would like more information about our work supporting student parents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "MS", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Marjorie Sims  
Managing Director  
Ascend at the Aspen Institute

**Maryland Catholic Conference\_FAV\_HB6.docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: Diane Arias

Position: FAV



MARYLAND  
CATHOLIC  
CONFERENCE

January 27, 2026

**House Bill 6**  
**Public Institutions of Higher Education - Pregnant and Parenting Students - Plan**  
**and Reporting**  
**House Appropriations Committee**

**Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

**House Bill 6** 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; requiring public institutions of higher education to collect and report certain demographic data from students; and requiring all public institutions of higher education to adopt a certain plan for pregnant and parenting students.

In Maryland, nearly 70,000 students, constituting one-fifth of undergraduates, are parents.<sup>1</sup> Student parents, often older, financially independent, highly motivated, and achieving better grades than their dependent peers, face significant challenges. However, a notable disparity exists, with just 8% of single-mother undergraduates earning an A.A. or B.A. within six years of college enrollment, compared to 49% of non-mothers.<sup>2</sup>

Collecting demographic data on parenting status is essential to understanding the scope of need and ensuring that institutions connect student parents with existing resources. This data may also inform future decisions about providing safe and appropriate childcare options so parenting students can attend classes while caring for their children. Importantly, data collection enables the State to allocate funding more effectively to support parenting students. Maryland took an important step last year by passing SB 511 requiring public senior higher education institutions to adopt a plan regarding pregnant and parenting students to include

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.generationhope.org/our-stories/maryland-advocacy-student-parent-data-collection#:~:text=Based%20on%20national%20data%2C%20we,%2C%20data%20analysts%2C%20and%20policymakers.>

<sup>2</sup> <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Maryland.pdf>

referral to on-campus or off-campus services. The data collected under House Bill 6 builds on that progress by ensuring these policies are adequately funded and implemented. Pregnancy and parenting support services play a critical role in helping students succeed academically while raising families. Parenting students pursue higher education to secure better-paying careers, and adequate campus support is essential to ensure they can complete their degrees without sacrificing their parental responsibilities. When eligible, access to government subsidies and support services can further stabilize families and promote long-term success.

This legislation affirms the value of life welcomed by parenting students and strengthens institutional support to help parents raise healthy families while achieving educational attainment.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **HB 6**.

Thank you for your consideration.

# **MD HB0006\_ New America Higher Education Team Writte**

Uploaded by: Ewa Obatuase

Position: FAV



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January 23, 2026

Appropriations Committee  
Maryland State Legislature  
120 Taylor House Office Building  
121 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Subject:** Testimony In Support of House Bill 0006-Public Institutions of Higher Education - Pregnant and Parenting Students - Plan and Reporting

Dear Chair Barnes and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

New America is a federal policy think tank based in Washington, D.C. and we write in support of HB 0006 which aims to improve Maryland's student parent data collection and implement institutional support plans for pregnant and parenting students. New America's higher education program is a team of researchers and advocates who are dedicated to making higher education more equitable and accountable so that every student has the chance to obtain an affordable, high-quality education.

Student parents are a significant presence on campuses, making up about 1 in 5 undergraduates and 1 in 4 graduate students.<sup>1</sup> The majority of parenting students are female, people of color, and on average older than the traditional college student.<sup>2</sup> In Maryland, this is an estimated 44,000 undergraduate degree-seeking students and 32,000 graduate students; but we do not know at which institutions or programs parenting students are enrolled and lack institution or state-level data on their persistence and graduation.<sup>3</sup> This significantly limits colleges and state lawmakers in supporting retention and graduation for parenting students, who represent significant workforce potential.

Ultimately, a lack of actionable data on parenting students to inform policy and support for these students jeopardizes state and federal investments in higher education and the workforce. It also puts students at risk of investing money, time, and energy into a postsecondary program that doesn't pay off, or worse, leaves them with student loan debt and depleted financial resources but without improved job prospects and financial security. In order to better support parenting students and

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<sup>1</sup> Anderson, Theresa, et al. 2024. *Who Are Undergraduates with Dependent Children? An Updated Overview of Student-Parent Characteristics Using 2020 Data*. n.p.: Student-Parent Action through Research Knowledge (SPARK) Collaborative.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> From authors' analysis of 2023 American Community Survey data. While ACS data gives an estimate of parenting students, the data does not include 1) nondegree seeking students, 2) students who parent a child that lives in another household, 3) students who are working toward a degree but had not been enrolled in classes within the prior 3 months of completing the ACS survey. It is therefore an undercount of parenting students in the state.

protect state and federal investments in higher education, we need better data which is why bills like HB 0006 are vital.

Existing research on the parenting student population relies heavily on the National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey (NPSAS), a survey that provides data insights to higher education researchers and policymakers but is limited in its utility for state-level analyses. This data collection effort is housed within the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) within the U.S. Department of Education, which has experienced a federal reduction in force over the past year and tumultuous moving of programs to other federal agencies. Serious questions have been raised regarding how NCES will continue to collect higher education data and make it available to researchers and policymakers.<sup>4</sup> It is more important than ever that states consider how to collect robust data so that they are able to identify trends in higher education and are equipped with accurate information to make decisions that support state attainment goals and workforce development.

While all students are required to pay for tuition and living expenses, parenting comes with additional costs such as child care and the current financial aid system is not designed to allot for this cost. The first step to improving this is ensuring that Maryland colleges have a proper accounting of how many parenting students are enrolled, how old their children are, and what kinds of support they need.

Ultimately, the different responsibilities that parenting students have create unique challenges which unfortunately means that parenting students experience delays in their higher education attainment. But it does not have to remain this way for parenting students in Maryland.

Research from Trellis Strategies shows that when parenting students receive targeted support, such as enhanced financial aid and on-campus child care, there is improvement in their academic performance.<sup>5</sup> The institutional support plans that this bill will implement will help direct parenting students to the right state and local services they need.

Without comprehensive data collection on this vital student population, state and institutional leaders struggle to truly understand parenting student experiences. Better data collection can help Maryland institutions dismantle the barriers hindering parenting students' success, and the institutional support plans will provide pregnant and parenting students the resources they need. We encourage the committee to support and pass HB 0006. Our team is also available for follow up questions and happy to provide additional research or resources on student parents in higher education. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Baker, MA, Senior Policy Manager, New America, Higher Education Policy Team

Ewaoluwa Obatuase, MPP, Policy Analyst, New America, Higher Education Policy Team

Richard Davis, Jr., MPA, Policy Analyst, New America, Higher Education Policy Team

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<sup>4</sup> Blake, Jessica, "Under McMahon, ED Is Diminished but Not Dead, Experts Say," Inside HigherEd, 2025, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/government/politics-elections/2025/11/03/under-mcmahon-ed-diminished-not-dead-experts-say>

<sup>5</sup> Fletcher, C., Cornett, A., Plumb, M.H., and Ashton, B. (2025). *Student Financial Wellness Survey report: Fall 2024*. Trellis Strategies.

# **Support\_Bill\_006\_Polito.pdf**

Uploaded by: Francesca Polito

Position: FAV

**Dr Francesca Polito**

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January 23, 2025

Delegate Ben Barnes  
Appropriations Committee  
Maryland State Legislature  
House Office Building  
Room 121  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Subject:** Testimony in Support of House Bill 006 – Maryland Higher Education Commission – Demographic Data Collection – Parental Status

Dear Delegate Ben Barnes and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Dr Francesca Polito and I am the Director of Information Science at the University of Maryland, Shady Grove Campus. I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 006. This bill builds on the progress made by [House Bill 0840](#), the Pregnant and Parenting Student Support Act, by strengthening implementation and accountability across Maryland's public higher education system.

While HB 0840 established important requirements for public senior higher education institutions to adopt plans supporting pregnant and parenting students, HB 006 takes the next critical step by expanding these requirements to all public institutions of higher education and by requiring the Maryland Higher Education Commission to collect consistent data on the parental status of enrolled students. Simply put, we cannot effectively support student parents if we do not know who they are. HB 006 provides the structure needed to identify pregnant and parenting students and connect them to the supports already required under Maryland law.

Nationally, one in five undergraduate students and one in three graduate students are parenting while enrolled in college. In Maryland, student parents represent a significant but often invisible population. Without comprehensive and uniform data collection, institutions and policymakers are limited in their ability to reach these students, assess whether supports are working, or ensure equitable access to services such as child care, health care, housing stability, and academic accommodations.

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.

I was a parenting student who graduated with my PhD from Iowa State University while raising 2 young children as a single mother. I can tell you, it was rough and not an experience I wish for others to suffer needlessly without support. Going through it and looking back, I met countless women who were unable to find work, no less work that was well paid, and accommodated their parenting responsibilities. These women, like myself, were stressed, broke, and scared. Many of these women had careers before becoming mothers that were simply not flexible or sustainable for the responsibilities of parenting. What struck me and still haunts me, is the situational paralysis these women fall victim to, stuck in an unnecessary cycle of struggle, fear, and exhaustion, both emotional and physical, because they lack the much needed support to upskill, reskill into high pay careers that offer greater flexibility and sustainability.

The benefits of supporting parents in education extends to include children and the local economy. By breaking the cycle of financial dependence and promoting social stability, parents can demonstrate to their children the importance of economic independence and educational fortitude. This creates a self-sustaining cycle where children, raised in a household of professional modeling and financial security, are better equipped to pursue high-value opportunities that set the entire family on a path toward greater financial strength and long-term economic sustainability.

Passing HB 006 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 006 and take this vital step toward creating a more inclusive and supportive educational environment for student parents.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

NOTE: My testimony does not represent the opinion or viewpoint of University of Maryland or their leadership, and my testimony is provided as a member of the public based on personal expertise or interest.

Sincerely,  
Dr Francesca Polito

# **HB006 Letter of Support - Jabette Lozupone 01 23 2**

Uploaded by: Ja'Bette Lozupone

Position: FAV

Ja'Bette Lozupone, D.O.L.  
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240-305-2426  
January 23, 2025

Delegate Ben Barnes  
Appropriations Committee  
Maryland State Legislature  
House Office Building  
Room 121  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Subject:** Testimony in Support of House Bill 006 – Maryland Higher Education Commission – Demographic Data Collection – Parental Status

Dear Delegate Ben Barnes and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

As a former teen mom while in college, who achieved her bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degrees, and who ultimately became a higher education administrator leading student-parent work at an institution in Maryland, I am writing to express my fierce support for House Bill 006. This bill builds on the progress made by House Bill 0840, the Pregnant and Parenting Student Support Act, by strengthening implementation and accountability across Maryland's public higher education system.

While HB 0840 established important requirements for public senior higher education institutions to adopt plans supporting pregnant and parenting students, HB 006 takes the next critical step to expand these requirements to all public higher education institutions by requiring the Maryland Higher Education Commission to collect consistent data on the parental status of enrolled students. Simply put, we cannot effectively support student parents if we do not know who they are and what they need to succeed. HB 006 provides the critical structure required to systematically identify pregnant and parenting students and connect them to the supports already required under Maryland law.

Nationally, one in five undergraduate students and one in three graduate students are parenting while enrolled in college. In Maryland, student parents represent a significant but often invisible population. Without comprehensive and uniform data collection, institutions and policymakers are limited in their ability to reach these

students, assess whether supports are working, or ensure equitable access to services such as childcare, healthcare, housing stability, and academic accommodations.

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 academic success and goals, as measured by enrollment, retention, completion, transfer, and employment data.

After becoming pregnant at 16 after my first semester away at college, I lost my campus housing. My priorities became full-time work, childcare, and continuing my post-secondary education at the local community college. If not for the handful of faculty and staff who supported me during my college journey, I would not have earned my degrees.

I will forever be grateful for my college business professor. After noticing that I would consistently return to class late from the break for her once-per-week evening course, she pulled me aside. She explained that she didn't want me to miss class. After I explained my situation, she encouraged me to bring my infant daughter with me to class, nurse her in the back of the classroom, and step out if she became fussy, which rarely, if ever, happened.

Her willingness to see me, acknowledge my lived experience, and support me ensured that I would excel academically, regardless of my parenting status. She gave my daughter and me one of the greatest gifts. It is why I write you as Dr. Ja'Bette Lozupone, a proud former student-parent and teen parent, higher education administrator, and business owner. House Bill 006 ensures that every parenting student at a public college in Maryland has access to the necessary resources and supports critical for their academic success.

Parenting students need to be seen, counted, heard, their outcomes measured, their contributions to society documented, and their formidable determination to provide economic mobility and prosperity for our families and communities, celebrated.

Passing HB 006 will ensure Maryland is well-positioned 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 national leader in fostering student success and equity in higher education.

I respectfully urge the Appropriations Committee to support HB 006 and take this vital step to create a more inclusive and supportive educational environment for student parents.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ja'Bette Lozupone

# **HB6 - Public Institutions of Higher Education - Pr**

Uploaded by: Jaime McCarthy

Position: FAV

January 27, 2026

Hon. Benjamin Barnes  
Chair, Appropriations Committee  
Maryland House of Delegates  
**Re: Support for House Bill 6**

Dear Chair Barnes and Committee Members,

On behalf of the Greater Washington Partnership (the Partnership), I am writing to express our support for HB 6, 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 provide 647,000 direct and supported jobs through their economic activity across the region, 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 6 is aligned with our goal of fostering a diverse and skilled talent pipeline needed for the jobs of today and tomorrow.

Nationwide, an estimated one in five undergraduate students and one in three graduate students are parenting while enrolled in school. Student parents are more likely to live at or below the poverty line than their non-parenting peers, and first-generation students and veterans are also frequently student parents. Although student parents maintain GPAs comparable to those of non-parenting students, over half depart higher education within six years without completing a bachelor's degree, compared to just 32 percent of students without children<sup>1</sup>. Addressing the special needs of these students improves retention and graduation rates as well as lifetime earnings outcomes, particularly for Pell-eligible students and other nontraditional students<sup>2</sup>. Strengthening data collection is a critical first step in meeting both student needs and workforce needs<sup>3</sup>.

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 6. 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.

Contact:  
Emily West  
Sr. Vice President, Policy & Initiatives  
[ewest@greaterwashingtonpartnership.com](mailto:ewest@greaterwashingtonpartnership.com)

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<sup>1</sup> Generation Hope: [National Student-Parent Survey Results & Recommendations](#), 2020.

<sup>2</sup> American Council on Education: [Student- Parent Data: What We Know, What We Don't, and How to Find Out](#), 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Bipartisan Policy Center: [Unlocking Parent Students' Potential through Intentional Postsecondary Supports](#), 2025.

# **Student parents bill.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ken Kerr

Position: FAV

KENNETH P. KERR, ED.D  
*Legislative District 3*  
Frederick County

Health and Government Operations  
Committee

*Subcommittees*

Chair, Government Operations and  
Health Facilities

Insurance and Pharmaceuticals



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
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## **HB 006– Maryland’s Institutions of Higher Education – Pregnant and Parenting Students – Plan and Reporting**

We return in Session 2026 with a modified version of this bill, which passed in the House of Delegates last year. During the Interim, educators and stakeholders have strengthened the bill’s support and implementation by securing support from the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC).

College students who are parenting dependent children face unique challenges that have a profound impact on the rate of their successful completion of their degree programs.

Preliminary statistics suggest the following:

- Only about 33% of student parents earn a degree or certificate within six years of entering their program, as opposed to 54% of students who do not have children,
- More than half (52% of student parents leave without earning degrees,
- Despite challenges, student parents tend to have higher GPAs (around 3.0 or higher) than their peers who do not have children
- Many student parents take longer to graduate due to their other circumstances: part-time enrollment, and balancing work, school and childcare.

Maryland does not publicly provide specific graduation rates for college students with dependent children. However, understanding the broad educational landscape in Maryland can offer insight into the realities of pursuing an advanced degree while raising dependent children.

In the 2022-‘23 academic year, the overall graduation rate for Maryland’s four-year cohort was 85.8%, a slight decrease from the 86.3% percent graduation rate in 2021-’22. Further, graduation rates vary among different student groups by race and ethnicity:

- Asian students had the highest graduation rate at 96.5 %,
- Caucasian students graduated at a rate of 93.5%
  
- Black/African-American students graduated at a rate of 84%
  
- Hispanic students graduated at a rate of 72.3%

While specific data on student parents in Maryland is unavailable, national trends suggest that only about 18% of student parents earn either an Associates or Bachelor's degree within six years of their matriculation, underscoring the challenges they face.

We may have theories about these demographics. However, it is crucial that institutions collect complete data to develop targeted programs that support student parents thereby improving their educational outcomes, and potentially their children's outcomes as well.

We respectfully request a favorable vote for HB 298.

**N.Owolabi\_Testimony\_HB006.pdf**

Uploaded by: Nina Owolabi

Position: FAV

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January 23, 2026

Delegate Ben Barnes  
Appropriations Committee  
Maryland State Legislature  
House Office Building Room 121  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Subject: Testimony in Support of House Bill 006 – Maryland Higher Education Commission – Demographic Data Collection – Parental Status

I am Nina Owolabi, a higher education researcher and working board member of the Student-Parent Action through Research Knowledge (SPARK) Collaborative, a values-driven, action-oriented community that seeks to support research, policy and direct services for student parents. I am also a current doctoral candidate and student parent living in Charles County, Maryland. I am writing to express my strong support of HB 006. This critical bill extends the important efforts of HB 0840 to ensure accountability for supporting parenting students not only as they pursue their collegiate journeys but also as they etch a pathway for their families to thrive.

HB 006 is another vital step toward a deeper understanding of the needs of student-parents and their families, driving policy and resource allocation to ensure accountability and efficiency. HB006 will ensure that student-parents facing systemic barriers to higher education are seen and heard so that they may be effectively supported.

### **Counting Student Parents Critical to Supporting Student Parents**

My research specifically looks at the Black experience in community colleges. Scholarship underscores the number of Black student parents attending community colleges. In Maryland, Black students are a key population, making up nearly 30% of all community college students.<sup>1</sup> However, there is no reliable, state-specific student parent data across postsecondary institutions. Almost half of all Black student parents attend community colleges nationwide,

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<sup>1</sup> Maryland Higher Education Commission. "Interactive Data Dashboards," n.d. <https://mhec.maryland.gov/About/Pages/Dashboards.aspx>.

with 46% choosing public two-year colleges. With such a sizeable and significant population, we cannot ignore the specific experiences of Black parenting students.

Nationally, nearly three out of ten Black undergraduate students are also parents.<sup>2</sup> How will we know who our student parents are and what their needs entail if we do not have consistent mechanisms to collect that information? Collecting Maryland data would help tremendously in identifying the student parents and offering them targeted support.

Times are especially tight, tough, and uncertain for families, especially for student parents. Federal programs that support families are shifting or being gutted. The reality is that Black communities are being hit particularly hard, with unemployment at some of the highest levels since the pandemic.<sup>3</sup> Some 36% of Black student parents could not come up with \$500 next month, more than one-third are food insecure, and 41% already rely on SNAP benefits.<sup>4</sup> Further, research suggests that this data does not capture the full scope of student parents who may be in need but are unaware of their eligibility for programs that could support their livelihoods.<sup>5</sup> As research elevates, public benefit programs are complex to navigate, with complicated eligibility requirements, documentation, and application procedures.<sup>6</sup> HB 006 establishes an important link to institutional resources that can provide an essential lifeline amid such political uncertainties and convoluted application processes, for Black student parents and so many others.

Currently diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives are being attacked and dismantled amid recent federal policy and political discourse.<sup>7</sup> Supporting student parents broadly is one effective method of simultaneously addressing some of the needs of Black students. By

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<sup>2</sup> Anderson, Theresa, Sheron Gittens, and Kate Westaby. "Infographic: Black Undergraduate Student Parents." SPARK Collaborative, September 30, 2024. <https://studentparentaction.org/resources/infographic-black-undergraduate-student-parents>.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Employment Status of the Civilian Population by Race, Sex, and Age." *Economic News Release*, January 9, 2026. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empstat.t02.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> Anderson, Gittens, and Westaby, "Infographic: Black Undergraduate Student Parents."

<sup>5</sup> Ryberg, Renee, and Christina Padilla. "Student Parents Combine Studying, Working, and Public Programs to Support Their Families While in School." SPARK Collaborative, September 30, 2025. <https://studentparentaction.org/resources/student-parents-combine-studying-working-and-public-programs>.

<sup>6</sup> Rios, Leslie, Carrie R. Welton, and Mark Huelsman. "The State of State Choices: A National Landscape Analysis of Postsecondary Eligibility Restrictions and Opportunities in SNAP, CCDF, and TANF." The Hope Center for Student Basic Needs, May 6, 2024. <https://hope.temple.edu/public-benefits-eligibility-students>.

<sup>7</sup> HCM Strategists, Achieving the Dream, and Equity Avengers. "LEVEL UP: Leveraging Explicit Value for Every Black Learner, Unapologetically." Black Learner Excellence and Success in Higher Ed, 2023. <https://blacklearnersuccess.com/publications>.

prioritizing student parent data collection, Maryland can join the ranks of other states leading the way to ensure the success of all their postsecondary students<sup>8</sup>.

At the SPARK Collaborative,<sup>9</sup> we use data, research, lived expertise, and past learning to inform policy and practice solutions while developing future generations of leaders. We believe that intentional data collection is a necessary step to understand how to support student parents in meaningful ways. The work does not stop at data collection, but data are critical to inform programming, curriculum, and resource allocation efficiently. SPARK’s recent basic needs and social safety net research elevates how institutions of higher education can be particularly supportive of student parents by doing exactly what HB 006 empowers administrators to do— help student parents learn and connect to public programs<sup>10</sup> and build “stronger partnerships between colleges and agencies that provide public programs can improve access to vital resources.”<sup>11</sup> By pursuing this legislation, the House Assembly is cementing its commitment to making it possible for the student parents of Maryland to complete their programs, get good jobs, and support their families.

Thank you for your consideration.

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<sup>8</sup> Anderson, Theresa. “Testimony in Support of House Bill 0298 – Maryland Higher Education Commission – Demographic Data Collection – Parental Status.” *Urban Institute*, January 31, 2025. <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/testimony-support-house-bill-0298-maryland-higher-education-commission>.

<sup>9</sup>SPARK Collaborative. “SPARK Collaborative,” December 10, 2025. <https://studentparentaction.org/>.

<sup>10</sup> SPARK Collaborative. “Meeting Student Parents’ Basic Needs,” <https://studentparentaction.org/resources/student-parents-basic-needs>

<sup>11</sup> Anderson, Theresa, Renee Ryberg, Amy Ellen Duke-Benfield, Kimberly Salazar, Shaquita Christian, and Fatou Sy. “Supporting Parenting Students Through College—Basic Needs Partnerships.” SPARK Collaborative, September 30, 2025. <https://studentparentaction.org/resources/supporting-parenting-students-through-college-basic-needs-partnerships>.

# **Testimony in support of HB0006 - Public Institutio**

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

HB0006\_RichardKaplowitz\_FAV

01/27/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz  
Frederick, MD 21703

**TESTIMONY ON HB#0006 – FAVORABLE**

**Public Institutions of Higher Education - Pregnant and Parenting Students - Plan and Reporting**

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

**FROM:** Richard Keith Kaplowitz

**My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#0006, Public Institutions of Higher Education - Pregnant and Parenting Students - Plan and Reporting**

This bill will require 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; requiring public institutions of higher education to collect and report certain demographic data from students; and requiring all public institutions of higher education to adopt a certain plan for pregnant and parenting students.

The Institute for Women’s Policy Research has studied this and developed excellent reasons to collect this information in support of government objectives.

While promoting student-parent success has mainly been left to institutions of higher education, several states have considered or adopted a range of policy initiatives to support student parents in postsecondary education. This paper provides state policy stakeholders, including governors, state agencies, and advocates, with a snapshot of the multitude of issues faced by student parents and with options to utilize state policy to address these issues.<sup>1</sup>

This legislation adds a commonsense methodology to accumulate data to guide government policy and funding by the schools, the jurisdiction they are in, and the state. The NPR report “*What the 'One Big Beautiful Bill' will change for students, schools and colleges*”<sup>2</sup> clearly explains all the effects of Federal cutbacks that will affect this population. Collection of demographic information can help the state budget to assist educational institutions to provide the necessary support to mitigate this Federal abandonment of our parent and pregnant students.

**I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report and pass HB0006.**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Student-Parent-State-Policy-Brief-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.npr.org/2025/07/18/nx-s1-5459784/trump-school-college-student>

# **HB 006 Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sarah Bigham

Position: FAV

Sarah Bigham  
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January 23, 2026

Delegate Ben Barnes  
Appropriations Committee  
Maryland State Legislature  
House Office Building  
Room 121  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Subject:** Testimony in Support of House Bill 006 – Maryland Higher Education Commission – Demographic Data Collection – Parental Status

Dear Delegate Ben Barnes and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

As a Maryland community college faculty member from Frederick, I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 006. This bill builds on the progress made by House Bill 0840, the Pregnant and Parenting Student Support Act, by strengthening implementation and accountability across Maryland's public higher education system.

While HB 0840 established important requirements for public senior higher education institutions to adopt plans supporting pregnant and parenting students, HB 006 takes the next critical step by expanding these requirements to all public institutions of higher education and by requiring the Maryland Higher Education Commission to collect consistent data on the parental status of enrolled students. Simply put, we cannot effectively support student parents if we do not know who they are. HB 006 provides the structure needed to identify pregnant and parenting students and connect them to the supports already required under Maryland law.

Nationally, one in five undergraduate students and one in three graduate students are parenting while enrolled in college. In Maryland, student parents represent a significant but often invisible population. Without comprehensive and uniform data collection, institutions and policymakers are limited in their ability to reach these students, assess whether supports are working, or ensure equitable access to services such as childcare, health care, housing stability, and academic accommodations.

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.

**I am a full professor in the School of Public Service, Social Sciences, and Education at Frederick Community College, where I have taught for over 20 years. During that time, I have had the privilege of working with students from a wide variety of backgrounds who are starting their college journeys, returning to school after time away, and continuing in their studies, despite numerous life challenges. I am always incredibly impressed with the sheer resilience of our students, especially those balancing schoolwork and jobs with caregiving responsibilities. Over the years, students have shared innumerable stories about their love and hopes for their children; worried about the never-ending transportation and scheduling issues they must navigate in order to remain in college while caregiving; and brought their young children to class when childcare arrangements have fallen through. If anyone is ever searching for motivated, invested students, all they need to do is turn to the caregivers. These students are working so hard to improve their own circumstances, and the world, so that their children and other loved ones can thrive. In order to provide the kind of effective support that these caregiving students need – and deserve – we must have accurate data to help guide future policy, planning, and financial decisions.**

**In 2025, FCC leadership made the decision to close our campus children's center in order to repurpose the space for workforce training. The children's center, a campus fixture for 30 years, provided childcare for FCC's youngest learners – the children of FCC parents, FCC employees, and Frederick community parents. Its closure was a huge loss for our campus and our community.**

**HB 006 will guarantee comprehensive data collection that will, in turn, help provide a full picture of the scope and needs of parenting students. This data can then be used as part of an examination of the needs of parenting students, along with an exploration of the supports needed for these learners to have equitable opportunities for success. My personal hope is that HB 006 will ultimately lead policy makers, elected representatives, college officials, decision makers, and all of us to a true understanding of the needs of parenting students. My dream is that, as a result, a broad range of student support services will be considered a funding and moral priority. I look forward to the day when no other campuses will ever face the closing of a beloved children's center and, instead, campuses are offering in-house childcare solutions as part of an overall web of support for caregiving students as they work toward their educational goals.**

Passing HB 006 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 006 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,

Sarah Bigham, Ed.D.

***(While I am an employee of FCC, I am representing my own views and not the views of the college.)***

# **Jess Myers HB 006 - Support.pdf**

Uploaded by: Yoslin Amaya

Position: FAV

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January 23, 2026

Delegate Ben Barnes  
Appropriations Committee  
Maryland State Legislature  
House Office Building  
Room 121  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Subject:** Testimony in Support of House Bill 006 – Maryland Higher Education Commission – Demographic Data Collection – Parental Status

Dear Delegate Ben Barnes and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

As a current professional working at an institution of higher education, a former Sr. Higher Ed Impact Manager at Generation Hope (a non-profit dedicated to supporting parenting students in college), the former director of the Women’s Center at University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC), and as someone who is from Baltimore, Maryland, I am writing to express my strong support for HB 006. This bill builds on the progress made by House Bill 0840, the Pregnant and Parenting Student Support Act, by strengthening implementation and accountability across Maryland’s public higher education system.

Nationwide, 1 in 5 undergraduate students and 1 in 3 graduate students are parenting while in college. This number is even higher in community colleges which is why it’s so critical that this bill includes them. Better data collection is an essential first step to improving college completion rates for student parents. Without comprehensive data collection on this vital student population, policymakers and institutional leaders struggle to truly understand student parents' experiences and dismantle the barriers impeding their academic and professional success.

Supporting student parents is a matter of racial and social justice. And, in the current political reality of our country, supporting parenting students is a way to move the needle forward in supporting racial justice even if we can’t say race or racism. Student parents are more likely to be students of color and live at or below the poverty line than their

non-parenting peers. The unique challenges faced by student parents are not only due to their parental status, but also due to the many intersecting identities that impact their journeys to and through higher education. Supporting student parent success will help the state of Maryland reach its goals in regards to retention and graduation rates for Pell-eligible students and students of color. A report released by Maryland Higher Education Commission in September 2023 indicates that not many colleges are collecting this data and those that are, do not have a comprehensive picture. The commission recommends that better data collection is needed to understand the full needs of this unique, and overlooked, population.

I share this background as greater context to my own professional story. As mentioned, I served as the director of the Women's Center at UMBC for eleven years between 2011 and 2022. Among my diverse portfolio and responsibilities, an important part of my work was supporting parenting members of UMBC community members to include students, staff, and faculty. I share this background as greater context to my own professional story. During my very busy days, I would often give up my office space for a busy student parent needing to pump when the Center's lactation room was occupied. The Center tracked the number of community members using the lactation room and it was only because we had the data that I could advocate for additional lactation rooms to be added to campus renovation projects such as incorporating a lactation room into the updated recreation center. Without these numbers, no one else on campus would know how many students, faculty, and staff needed these essential spaces and services. Yet, this data was kept only in the Women's Center, reported out in our yearly annual report, or shared as needed. It was not systematically collected nor was it systematically collected. How many other nursing students are not being counted. How many other pregnant, nursing, and parenting students are not getting their needs met because they are otherwise invisible on campus?

Additionally, I oversaw a scholarship program for adult learners. Of the approximately 25 students the Center served each year, at least half of these students were parenting students. As part of the application process, the Center was able to collect data on these students to include how many children they had and their children's ages. Through my semesterly check-ins with them, through the events they attended, and how they used the Center space, I learned deeply about the way being a parent shaped and impacted their experience as a UMBC student. The Women's Center adjusted our services and supports to accommodate them and when possible, I would use these experiences to inform other faculty and staff to encourage similar kinds of accommodations and supports.

The Foundation that provided the scholarship funds would ask us to compare the scholarship recipients to other similar non-scholarship recipient students at UMBC. Most often, scholarship recipients had better GPAs and were retained at higher rates from semester to semester than those who were not receiving scholarships. We used age as a

comparison, but were unable to compare by parenting status because UMBC did not collect that data. Considering some of the other statistics on parenting students that include the fact that they often have better GPAs than their non-parenting peers yet are more likely to drop out and not complete college, I do not doubt that the parenting students who were not connected to the Women's Center via our scholarship most likely were struggling academically and personally. Yet, there was no way the Women's Center, nor UMBC, could reach out to them, assess their needs, and create additional resources and support to meet their unique needs as parents.

This is a failure of our institutions and we must do better. I would like to think that schools like UMBC would be motivated to collect this data, but I also acknowledge that staff in positions to make this happen are charged with competing priorities and often are operating with limited staff. I witnessed this in my former role as a Sr. Higher Ed Impact Manager at Generation Hope. There, I worked with institutions who committed to a 2-year program called FamilyU to enable their schools to better support student parents and STILL moving the needle on student parent data collection is always challenging. I coached a community college in Texas and it wasn't until passage of legislation that created new protections for pregnant and parenting students in Texas, specifically Texas Ed. Code. § 51.9 (SB597/HB13610,) that enabled the team to make progress in creating systemic student parent data collection. They have since been able to begin systematically collecting data about their student parents. In turn, they have been able to identify these students to follow up with additional support and resources. This would have not been possible without the passage of this legislation.

This proposed legislation will allow State and institutional policymakers and leaders to access data that more accurately captures the number of parenting students in Maryland than ever before. Based on national data, it can be assumed that more than 70,000 Marylanders are parenting while attending college part- or full-time. This information will increase awareness of student parents and the unique barriers that they face and empower policymakers at every level to make informed decisions and provide targeted support for this often-overlooked population. Student parents deserve to be recognized and supported so that they can succeed in higher education and beyond.

I urge the Appropriations Committee to support HB 006 so that Maryland can continue to be a leader in higher education. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Jess Myers

# **Yoslin Amaya - HB 006 - Favorable.pdf**

Uploaded by: Yoslin Amaya

Position: FAV

**Yoslin Amaya Hernandez**

13315 Ardennes Ave  
Rockville, MD 20851  
January 31, 2025

**Delegate Ben Barnes**

Chair, Appropriations Committee  
Maryland State Legislature  
House Office Building, Room 121  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Subject: Testimony in Support of House Bill 006 – Public Institutions of Higher Education - Pregnant and Parenting Students - Plan and Reporting**

Dear Chair Barnes and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Yoslin Amaya Hernandez, and I am a graduate student parent, a Montgomery County resident, and a policy and advocacy professional working closely with student parents across Maryland. I am writing in strong support of House Bill 006.

HB 006 builds on the Pregnant and Parenting Student Support Act by strengthening implementation and accountability across Maryland's public higher education system. While existing law requires institutions to develop plans to support pregnant and parenting students, HB 006 takes the critical next step by expanding those requirements to all public institutions and by requiring consistent data collection on students' parental status. Simply put, we cannot effectively support student parents if we do not know who they are.

Nationally, one in five undergraduate students and one in three graduate students are parenting while enrolled in college. In Maryland, student parents represent a significant but often invisible population. Without reliable, uniform data, institutions are limited in their ability to connect students to existing supports, evaluate whether those supports are working, or plan effectively for services such as child care, housing stability, academic flexibility, and health care access.

As both a student parent and someone who has worked closely with colleges, advocates, and policymakers, I have seen how the absence of data creates gaps in support. When student parents are not identified, they are often excluded from planning conversations, overlooked in resource allocation, and left to navigate higher education systems on their own. This invisibility disproportionately affects students of color and students with low incomes, making data collection an issue of equity as well as efficiency.

HB 006 provides Maryland with the tools needed to better understand and serve an estimated 70,000 student parents across the state. By requiring the Maryland Higher Education Commission to collect consistent demographic data, this bill will allow institutions and

policymakers to move from assumptions to informed action and ensure that existing legal requirements translate into meaningful, on-the-ground support.

I respectfully urge the Appropriations Committee to support House Bill 006 and continue Maryland's leadership in advancing equity and student success in higher education.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Yoslin Amaya Hernandez

# **Letter in support of HB 006.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jessica Lee

Position: FWA



January 23, 2026

Delegate Ben Barnes  
Appropriations Committee  
Maryland State Legislature  
House Office Building, Room 121  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Subject: Testimony in Support of House Bill 006 – Maryland Higher Education Commission  
– Demographic Data Collection – Parental Status**

Dear Delegate Barnes and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

As Director of the Pregnant Scholar Initiative, the nation's legal resource center on the rights of pregnant and parenting students, I am writing to express my support for House Bill 006 and offer information on how the bill may be improved to better serve students in higher education.

*Support for data collection*

My organization provides technical assistance to higher education institutions nationwide, equipping administrators with the tools they need to recruit, retain, and graduate pregnant and parenting students. In my more than a decade of experience, a persistent problem exists; institutions cannot serve students if they do not know who they are. Moreover, not tracking student parents and their needs causes institutions to operate inefficiently—employing strategies that don't work, wasting precious state resources in the process.

HB 006 would address this issue by requiring institutions to include parental status in demographic collection. It would also require institutions to track key details such as the age of the student's child(ren); these details are essential to assist institutions of higher education in their efforts to retain students and meet their needs. For example, understanding the ages of students' children enables institutions, state/local agencies, and community organizations to better assess childcare needs and tailor any services provided to the actual demand. By counting parenting students, we can more effectively allocate resources to support them—and evaluate whether those resources are having the desired effect.

Currently, the National Center for Education Statistics within the U.S. Department of Education collects some data on the student parent population. This data was already insufficient to meet the needs of states and educational institutions; now, with the dismantling of the



Department of Education, we anticipate new problems with data availability and reliability.<sup>1</sup> As such, it is critical for states to step in to collect this essential data so that they have the high-quality information they need to secure their economic future.

Supporting pregnant and parenting students—first, by counting them—is a small but worthwhile investment in student success. Student parents make up 1 in 5 undergraduate students and 1 in 4 graduates.<sup>2</sup> While these students’ academic achievement is on par (if not higher) than that of their childless peers, they are also far less likely to graduate on time.<sup>3</sup> Yet when they do have the support they need to achieve their educational goals it brings far-reaching benefits; parents earn more income, and their children are more likely to reach their own educational goals.<sup>4</sup>

#### *Amendments are needed to section on institutional plans*

While I applaud the legislature’s adoption of a requirement for educational institutions to establish plans to support pregnant and parenting students, before extending this requirement to more schools, amendments are needed to ensure the provision brings no harm. As written, HB 006 would require additional institutions of higher education in Maryland to adopt a plan that includes referring students to off-campus resources for adoption services and healthcare. While increasing access to health and family support is a laudable goal, encouraging college staff to engage with students regarding these extremely sensitive and complex issues carries grave risk.

Pregnant students have sought help from our Pregnant Scholar helpline after being encouraged by university officials to terminate their pregnancies. Similarly, students have requested our help after being pressured to *not* have an abortion. Relatedly, in 2025, reporting brought to light

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<sup>1</sup> Kathryn Palmer, Guttled NCES Releases First Batch of Higher Ed Data, Inside Higher Ed (September 25, 2025), available at: <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/faculty-issues/research/2025/09/25/guttled-nces-releases-first-batch-higher-ed-data>.

<sup>2</sup> Theresa Anderson, et al. *Who Are Undergraduates with Dependent Children? An Updated Overview of Student-Parent Characteristics Using 2020 Data*. Student-Parent Action through Research Knowledge (SPARK) Collaborative, (2024) available at: <https://studentparentaction.org/resources/who-are-undergraduates-with-dependent-children-2020>.

<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., New Data Insights on Student Parents from a Multi-Organization Collaborative Effort, Institute for Women’s Policy Research, <https://iwpr.org/new-data-insights-on-student-parents-from-a-multi-organization-collaborative-effort/#:~:text=Student%20parents%20are%20highly%20motivated,peers'%20average%20GPA%20of%203.15>.

<sup>4</sup> Theresa Anderson, “What If Mom Went Back to School?” Urban Institute, (2022) available at: <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/what-if-mom-went-back-school>.



that university staff tasked with supporting pregnant students may have been coercing the students into putting their babies up for adoption.<sup>5</sup>

Encouraging campus officials to engage with students' reproductive health and family decisions invites discrimination and harassment in violation of Title IX and state law. What's more, providing referrals to off campus healthcare engenders even more liability; will the services be vetted? Are they safe? Do they pressure young people into terminating their pregnancies, or the inverse? For these reasons, I encourage you to strike subsection (c)(2)(ii) and (iv) requiring institutions to make referrals to off campus healthcare and adoption providers.

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Passing HB 006 will ensure Maryland has the tools to support its thousands of student parents, empowering them to thrive in higher education and beyond. I respectfully urge the Committee to support HB 006, with amendments.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jessica Lee, J.D.

Co-Founder and Director, Pregnant Scholar  
Co-Director, WorkLife Law

#### *About the Pregnant Scholar*

*WorkLife Law's [Pregnant Scholar Initiative](#) is the nation's legal resource center on the rights of pregnant and parenting students in postsecondary education and is based at the University of California College of the Law, San Francisco. The Pregnant Scholar works with postsecondary institutions to help them understand their legal obligations to accommodate and not discriminate against pregnant and parenting students, as required by Title IX and various state laws. We also provide direct services to student parents and pregnant students who have questions about their legal rights.*

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<sup>5</sup> Whitney Evans, 'Liberty Lost' podcast alleges program coerced pregnant teens into adoption, Virginia Public Media News (August 12, 2025) available at: <https://www.vpm.org/news/2025-08-12/liberty-lost-tj-raphael-maternity-home-family-life-services-adoption>.

**UNFAVORABLE.HB6.LauraBogley.MDRTL.pdf**

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## **OPPOSITION STATEMENT HB6**

### **Public Institutions of Higher Education – Pregnant and Parenting Students – Plan & Reporting**

Laura Bogley, JD

Executive Director, Maryland Right to Life

### **We Strongly Oppose Abortion Promotion and Funding in Public Institutions of Higher Education**

Maryland Right to Life (MDRTL) supports any public policy that enables and empowers young women and men to choose life for their preborn children. Maryland Right to Life offers to assist any legislator or institute of higher education in developing policies and programs to exclusively support healthy birth and delivery outcomes. We work with a network of providers who promote life-affirming programs and services for pregnant women and girls at no cost.

We applaud any effort to create an educational environment that supports students in their decisions to provide life to and/or to parent their children. However, we must oppose this bill and any mandate on public schools, community colleges and universities that requires referral to, promotion or funding of abortion and abortion providers.

Previous iterations of this bill expanded abortion access on certain University campuses within the University of Maryland system while rejecting equal access to lifesaving alternatives to abortion for students as required by federal Title IX's neutrality standard. This bill expands upon those non-compliant programs with their entrenched abortion bias, by applying the program under Education Article Section 15-140 to ALL public institutions of Higher Education in Maryland, which would include community colleges.

### **Federal Title IX Requires Abortion Accommodation**

MDRTL has been consistent in our position that we cannot support any bill that would expand abortion access and coordination by codifying federal Title IX. Regulations attached to Title IX since 1975, corrupted the intent of the federal Higher Education Act of 1965 by requiring that any institution that receives federal funds, must provide equal accommodation for pregnancy **AND *termination of pregnancy*** by abortion. Because this bill seeks to codify Title IX in Maryland statute and administrative policy, the bill cannot be cured by any amendment.

While federal Title IX requires any institution that receives federal funds to provide equal accommodation for pregnancy or termination of pregnancy, including things like larger desks and excused absences, the state has no legal obligation to provide access, coordination or public funding for abortion including on campuses.

## **Bill Goes Further than Title IX**

**No Conscience Protections** - This bill does not contain a conscience clause to protect the rights of faculty or staff who do not want to participate in abortion coordination or practices. Existing conscience protections in state law for medical providers are insufficient and would not automatically extend to college staff.

**Referrals to Abortion Providers** – The existing program requires that pregnant students be referred to state programs that fund abortions including the Maryland Medical Assistance Program and the Maryland Children's Health Insurance Program. In 2023, the state reports that 12,727 abortions were committed and abortionists were reimbursed \$7.9 million in taxpayer funds under the Medical Assistance Program. Less than 11 of those taxpayer-funded abortions were for reasons of rape, incest or to save the physical life of the mother.

State referral practices are extremely problematic, as the Maryland Department of Health and the Maryland Department of Education routinely refer pregnant women to Planned Parenthood despite the fact that only 14% of their facilities provide even minimal prenatal care, and their advertised adoption counseling services have been proven to be negligible but intended instead to serve as a feeder system for abortion sales.

**Coordination of Abortion Services** - This bill requires that all colleges and universities coordinate services through an undefined "referral network of health care providers". But Section 15-136 of the Education Article of the Maryland Code, already require that colleges and universities develop and implement reproductive health services plans to provide or refer students to a “comprehensive” range of reproductive health services, expressly including abortion (See additional details below.)

Because of the state of Maryland's abortion bias, the state systemically discriminates against pro-life organizations and providers and excludes them from participation in any state programs or procurement contracts claiming they do not provide “comprehensive” care because they will not commit or refer for abortions. Conversely the state routinely entrusts the profit-minded abortion industry and their network to define and implement state programs to target pregnant women and students, despite the fact that after nearly 50 years of taxpayer subsidization, they have failed to eliminate unplanned pregnancies.

## **State is in Violation of Title IX**

It is MDRTL’s position that the State of Maryland is in direct violation of Title IX by refusing to provide pregnant students in public universities and colleges equal accommodation or access to pro-life providers and lifesaving alternatives to abortion. In 2023, the members of the Maryland General Assembly enacted Chapters 250 and 251 - *Public Senior Higher Education Institutions – Reproductive Health Services Plans – Requirements*, now Section 15-136 of the Education Article of the Maryland Code. The Assembly codified your clear intention to mandate abortion on campuses, by requiring the coordination of abortion services while rejecting amendments to provide students resources or referrals for healthy birth and delivery outcomes.

## **State is Engaging in Abortion Coercion**

As a result of the state's blatant abortion bias and systemic discrimination against pro-life speech and providers, the state is depriving women real choice and engaging in constructive abortion coercion. Under current Maryland law, there is no explicit measure prohibiting any individual from coercing a woman into abortion.

The *majority* of women who have had abortions (64%) report afterward that they were pressured into the decision. With the documented severity of physical and psychological repercussions of abortion, protection from abortion coercion becomes even more essential in ensuring that the best interests of students are protected. But this bill will require colleges and universities to refer pregnant students to providers who may coerce them into using abortion drugs or procedures for their own financial gain.

Coercion encompasses any situation in which a pregnant mother is made to feel - by any means - that she has *no choice* but an abortion. Coercion sends a mother into the belief that *either the baby dies or I will die or suffer great harm*, which may include losing a scholarship, being displaced from a team or even temporarily delaying education.

The abortion industry self-identifies as *pro-choice*, but in reality, choice has little to do with the abortion transaction. Far from enshrining protections from coercion, the abortion industry operates on omission: they omit important questions about coercion during pre-abortion "counseling" and fail to provide information about the effects of a coerced abortion.

Abortion providers also have demonstrated an unwillingness to protect women and girls against sexual abuse and trafficking by refusing to report suspected abuse to law enforcement or other public authorities while agreeing to commit abortions on suspected victims.

### **State Government Obligation to Parents and Students**

Parents send their daughters to college for an education, not for an abortion. The State of Maryland has an obligation to provide a safe and healthy environment for all students attending institutes of higher education within this state. The state cannot reasonably entrust abortion providers and others who stand to gain financially from the sale of abortions, with the education and care of pregnant students.

The bill undermines parental rights to make medical decisions for their children as many young adults remain on their parents' insurance policies until the age of twenty-six. However, parents who do not have the right to consent to abortion procedures for their children, will be financially responsible for any medical or psychological health interventions necessary as a result of abortion injuries or death. By enacting this bill the state will violate the trust of parents and far exceed its limited authority to act in place of the parents on campus, particularly in the matter of student health.

### **MDRTL Opposes Public Funding for Abortion on Campus**

It is MDRTL's position that the state of Maryland is failing in its fiduciary responsibility to state taxpayers and failing to provide for the legitimate healthcare needs of pregnant women and girls in Maryland.

The fact that the number of abortions is highest among college-aged students, demonstrates that decades of public funding to abortion activists in Maryland k-12 public education, has failed to prepare our youth

with sound family planning practices. Throwing additional public funding toward the multi-billion dollar abortion industry's failed practices, is not sound fiscal policy and harms those most in need of quality maternal health care options.

Maryland taxpayers should not be forced to subsidize abortion indoctrination, promotion and abortion violence. **A 2026 Marist poll showed that 54% of people polled oppose the use of tax dollars to pay for abortion and 88% favor laws that protect both the lives of women and unborn children.** Public funds instead should be prioritized to fund legitimate health and family planning services which have the objective of saving the lives of both mother and children, including programs for improving maternal health and birth and delivery outcomes, well baby care, parenting classes, foster care reform and affordable adoption programs.

Pregnant women and students have better alternatives for maternal health. There are 14 federally qualifying health centers and 4 pregnancy centers for each Planned Parenthood in Maryland. Planned Parenthood profits from abortion sales and is not a significant provider of prenatal care or adoption referrals.

### **Funding restrictions are constitutional**

The Supreme Court of the United States, in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health* (2022), overturned *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and held that there is no right to abortion found in the Constitution of the United States. As early as 1980 the Supreme Court affirmed in *Harris v. McRae*, that *Roe* had created a limitation on government, not a government funding entitlement. The Court ruled that the government may distinguish between abortion and other procedures in funding decisions -- noting that "*no other procedure involves the purposeful termination of a potential life*", and held that there is "*no limitation on the authority of a State to make a value judgment favoring childbirth over abortion, and to implement that judgment by the allocation of public funds.*"

### **Abortion is not healthcare**

Abortion is not healthcare. It is violence and brutality that ends the lives of unborn children through suction, dismemberment or chemical poisoning. The fact that 85% of OB-GYNs in a representative national survey do not perform abortions on their patients is glaring evidence that abortion is not an essential part of women's healthcare.

Recent acts of abortion activists occupying the Maryland General Assembly have completely removed abortion from the spectrum of healthcare. As a result of the *Abortion Care Access Act* of 2022, sponsored by Delegate Ariana Kelly (D-Montgomery), a former NARAL employee, poor women will be deprived access to care through a licensed physician. To the detriment of women's reproductive health, the state is now allowing any "certified provider of abortion care" to perform or provide both surgical and chemical abortion through birth.

Combine this with the fact that nearly 75% of abortions are now "Do-It-Yourself" abortions where women are remotely prescribed dangerous abortion pills without a physician's examination and are left to hemorrhage alone until their bodies forcefully expel their babies' bodies, and the argument that abortion is healthcare is completely discredited.

## **Abortion is a Failed Policy**

Nearly fifty years of federal abortion mandates on the state have failed to cure the underlying socio-economic challenges women face in raising their families. The abortion industry has failed to reduce pregnancies, but only reduced the number of *live births*. In fact, the number of abortions has increased proportionately with the increase in public funding for abortion businesses.

Planned Parenthood and their network of organizations are financially invested in unplanned pregnancies that increase abortion profits. They cannot be trusted to instruct children and young adults in human reproduction and sexuality or to promote their abortion business under the guise of student “health”.

The fact that the number of abortions is highest among college-aged students, demonstrates that decades of public funding to abortion activists in Maryland k-12 public education, has failed to prepare our youth with sound family planning practices. Throwing additional public funding toward the multi-billion dollar abortion industry’s failed practices, is not sound fiscal policy and harms those most in need of quality maternal health care options.

### **Disparate Impact Statement: Abortion is having a genocidal impact on Black Marylanders**

Abortion has a disproportionate impact on Black Americans who have long been targeted by the abortion industry for eugenics purposes. Even today 78% of abortion clinics are located in minority communities. As a result abortion violence has become the leading killer of Black lives, more than gun violence and all other causes combined. More than half of all pregnancies to Black women in Baltimore City end through abortion violence.

The state fails to measure or report the correlation between the increased use of abortion with increased risk to maternal mortality, infertility, miscarriage, pre-term births for Black mothers. This makes any argument that abortion is healthcare a morally repugnant call for state-sponsored genocide of Black children in Maryland.

**For these reasons we respectfully urge you to issue an unfavorable report on this bill and encourage the sponsor to introduce a bill that is narrowly tailored to ensure that pregnant students are provided access to lifesaving alternatives to abortion without fear of abortion coercion on campus.**

**HB6\_USM\_INFO.pdf**

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## **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.

