



HB0522 - Education – Home and Hospital Teaching Program for Students

Presented to the Honorable Anne Kaiser and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

February 19, 2020 1:00 p.m.

POSITION: SUPPORT

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges the House Ways and Means Committee to issue **a favorable report on HB0522 - Education – Home and Hospital Teaching Program for Students**, sponsored by Delegate Harry Bhandari.

Our organization is an advocate for reproductive health, rights, and justice. As part of our efforts to protect reproductive freedom for all Marylanders, we work to ensure every child-bearing individual has the right to decide if, when, and how to form their families and to parent in good health, in safety, and with dignity. Youth have the same rights as adults in choosing when to form their families. Among our campaigns to ensure reproductive freedom for all Marylanders, we seek to help identify and create effective supports to help pregnant and parenting students stay in school, on track to graduate, and headed towards economic security.

In 2017, the Maryland General Assembly passed HB0616, establishing excused absences for pregnant and parenting students for medical and legal reasons, and clarifying that although pregnancy is not an illness, it is a medical event that requires reasonable time off from school to address prenatal needs and postpartum recovery, without being unfairly subjected to truancy allegations or school pushout. Each year, approximately 800 youth from ages 15 to 17 give birth in Maryland, and roughly another 2,200 among those 18 or 19 years-old. Nationally, close to half of female school dropouts and one-third of male dropouts report that becoming a parent was a factor in their decision to leave school. We currently have no information about graduation rates for Maryland pregnant and parenting students. As we attempt to address the lack of data collection on educational outcomes and how to best address barriers to obtaining high school diplomas, we need to also explore reasonable access to home and hospital teaching programs for students enduring significant pregnancy complications, as well as for those with pregnancies resulting in premature births requiring longer time away from mainstream classroom settings. Under Title IX, these students share the same rights to opportunities for a rigorous education as their non-parenting peers. For a successful transition back into their schools of origin, students with more complicated pregnancy experiences will be relying on effective instructors and solid case management if it is appropriate for them to participate in the home and hospital teaching program. A report on the current functioning and recommendations for improvement of this program will help all students experiencing major medical events in their lives and realize their educational goals.

Pregnant and parenting students often report having a renewed sense of commitment to their educational outcomes, knowing full well that high school diplomas will lead to better employment prospects in order to adequately care for the families they are forming. For these reasons, NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland **urges a favorable committee report on bill HB0522**. Thank you for your time and consideration.