

SB0470 Institute for Innovation and Implementation - Pregnant, Expectant, and Parenting Students - Data Collection and Reports

Presented to the Hon. Paul Pinsky and Members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

February 25, 2021 11:00 a.m.

POSITION: SUPPORT

Dear Hon. Paul Pinsky and Members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee,

Thank you for the work of the Maryland General Assembly in its dedication to improving the educational outcomes for Maryland's youth and its commitment to students having equal opportunity to the same rigorous curriculum across all populations throughout our state.

We are writing today to express our support of SB0470 because of the immediate need to track the educational outcomes of pregnant and parenting youth in Maryland's public schools. There were 2,645 births to teenagers under the age of 19 in the state in 2018.¹ However, there is a large discrepancy in the reported dropout rate due to pregnancy or parenting status. Maryland's public schools reported that 49 students formally withdrew from school during the 2017-2018 academic year for "pregnancy" or "parenting" reasons, while nationwide, approximately only 40% of teen mothers finish high school.^{2,3} Pregnant and parenting students who do not provide a reason for leaving school may be categorized "whereabouts unknown", of which there were 4,876 students in the 2017-18 school year.⁴ This shows a dramatic discrepancy in data collection and reporting. Schools in Maryland thus far have been inadequately prepared to support pregnant and parenting students and creating a partnership with the University of Maryland will ensure that accurate data will be collected, and school administrators will be carefully trained to best support this student population.

This bill will establish a partnership with the University of Maryland's Institute for Innovation in order to launch a professionally led data collection and dissemination process with Maryland's public schools in order to strengthen support for pregnant and parenting students. This partnership will improve the educational outcomes of students through the following processes established in this bill:

1. School data will be analyzed and disseminated based on the following criteria:
 - a. Number of students seeking and attaining diplomas or degrees
 - b. Duration of school enrollment and any truancy claims
 - c. School based support services utilized by the pregnant or parenting students
 - d. The means to distribute information pertaining to the educational rights for pregnant and

¹ Power to Decide: The Campaign to End Unplanned Pregnancy <https://powertodecide.org/what-we-do/information/national-state-data/maryland>

² Summary of Attendance for Maryland Public Schools 2017-2018
<http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DCAA/SSP/20172018Student/2018Attendance.pdf>

³ Shuger, L. (2012). *Teen Pregnancy and High School Dropout: What Communities are Doing to Address These Issues*.

⁴ Summary of Attendance for Maryland Public Schools 2017-2018
<http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DCAA/SSP/20172018Student/2018Attendance.pdf>

parenting students as protected under Title IX

2. The Institute for Innovation will document and evaluate professional development activities for pregnant, expectant, and parenting students within each school district and provide recommendations to school administrators to improve these activities through mid-point and final reports.

3. The project will document and evaluate local policy changes within each district in order to protect and support pregnant and parenting students. This information will then be used to generate reports on school dropout rates and provide future policy recommendations.

4. The project will actively train school administrators on data collection, enhancing autonomy of school districts and allowing them to provide input and leadership to support pregnant and parenting students in their own school districts.

The thorough project scope submitted by the Institute for Innovation will ensure that data is being collected accurately and ethically while considering the privacy of students. Most importantly, this bill allows for school administrators to be trained on data collection methods and processes for providing specific support services for their students while improving their educational outcomes.

As allies, we are signing onto this letter because it is essential that the state prioritizes this collaboration to improve positive educational outcomes of pregnant and parenting students. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Joel Spielberger, ACLU of Maryland
Melissa Rock, Advocates for Children and Youth
Patricia Liggins, Birth Supports United
Janet Max, Healthy Teen Network
Maryland National Organization for Women
C.R. Valeriann, Baltimore NOW
Jeannette Feldner, Montgomery County NOW
Michelle Ogunwole, Physician
Ashley Black, Public Justice Center
Keontae Kells, Family League of Baltimore
Rachelle Ciulla, Doula and SSPH Candidate, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Health
Rick Tyler, Maryland Education Coalition
Shamoyia Gardiner, Strong Schools Maryland
American College of Nurse Midwives – Maryland Affiliate