**SB0437 - Maryland Longitudinal Database System-Student Data
– Pregnant and Parenting Students**
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 HB0359/SB0437 because of the immediate need to track the
educational outcomes of pregnant and parenting youth in Maryland's public schools. This bill will allow the
state to accurately monitor the number of pregnant and parenting students achieving high school diplomas
and to assess the number of youth being pushed out of school due to what students too often find are
unwelcoming and unsupportive school climates, derailing progress in realizing educational goals and
economic security.

According to aggregated data collected between 2011 and 2017, 11 counties in Maryland have teen birth
rates higher than the national average with Baltimore City and Dorchester County having rates over twice as
high. There were 2,645 births to teenagers under the age of 19 in the state in 2018. 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. 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. This shows a
dramatic discrepancy in data collection and reporting.

As a result, it is clear that school systems are inadequately prepared to support this student population and
have failed to accurately represent the reasons students drop out of school.

This bill will directly address this gap in data collection and analysis by including pregnant and parenting
student status in the Maryland Longitudinal Database System, allowing the state to track and assess the
number of students receiving the essential support to achieve positive educational outcomes.

We are signing onto this letter because it is essential that the state begins accurately collecting information
on educational outcomes for pregnant and parenting students. Thank you for the opportunity to submit
testimony.

Joel Spielberger, ACLU of MD
Ashley Black, Public Justice Center
Melissa Rock, Advocates for Children and Youth
Michelle Siri, Women's Law Center of Maryland
C.R. Valeriann, Baltimore NOW
Jeannette Feldner, Montgomery Country NOW
Sandy Bell, Maryland NOW
Shamoyia Gardiner, Strong Schools Maryland
Rick Tyler, Maryland Education Coalition
Rachelle Ciulla, Doula and SSPH Candidate, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Health