



## SB438 PUBLIC SCHOOLS - PREGNANT AND PARENTING STUDENTS - POLICIES AND REPORTS

February 25, 2021

EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

### OPPOSE

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Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) opposes **SB438 Public Schools - Pregnant and Parenting Students - Policies and Reports**. This bill requires each local school system to designate a coordinator for education of pregnant and parenting students to assist pregnant and parenting students in accessing lactation accommodations, childcare services, and other support services. The bill also requires each school to, among other requirements, provide 1) private lactation space in the school and 2) either onsite childcare or referrals to safe, affordable, and reliable childcare. Each local school board must collect specified information and submit it to the University of Maryland Institute for Innovation and Implementation, which must in turn submit an interim and final report by specified dates. The bill also expands the types of absences that must be excused for pregnant and parenting students.

AACPS appreciates the intentions of this legislation as we are committed to meeting the needs of pregnant and parenting students and employees. In fact, the Maryland Breastfeeding Coalition has honored AACPS with a Breastfeeding-Friendly Workplace Award for its efforts to develop and implement inclusive policies and procedures that support breastfeeding through a conducive office environment and education of staff and families. AACPS is the first school system in Maryland to develop a comprehensive policy regarding lactation, according to the Coalition.

AACPS supported legislation passed by the General Assembly in 2017 which required school systems to adopt a policy for pregnant and parenting students. The current law is very prescriptive. AACPS has adopted and successfully implemented the required policy in accordance with the law. SB438 would impose significant new responsibilities and professional obligations on school personnel, create new legal liabilities arising from mandated referral procedures, place new demands on school transportation, and create an unfunded mandate. We firmly believe that such specific elements of service delivery are best suited to regulations, guidelines, and local policies and procedures.

While AACPS appreciates that this bill is well intentioned, we have concerns with several provisions in the bill. For example, we oppose the provision requiring schools to provide onsite childcare referrals as this raises liability concerns. We also have serious concerns with the requirement to address any need for transportation accommodations. This additional requirement would certainly create an unfunded mandate. It is important to note that school systems are currently facing a bus driver shortage and the potential for transportation needs are significant given the broad manner in which this provision of the bill is drafted. We also oppose the bill's unfunded mandate for a new staff position in each central office of each school system to fulfill these responsibilities. This bill would have a significant fiscal impact on AACPS.

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report on SB438.