

HB0401 - Public Schools-Pregnant and Parenting Students-Policies and Reports

January 27, 2021 at 1:30 p.m.

POSITION: SUPPORT

Dear Chair Anne Kaiser and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee.

I am writing to you today to support HB0401. If this legislation were to pass Teen parents in Maryland public schools would be able to continue their education and have support from the state. Being a parent is a challenge there are many downs, but the ups make it all worth it. I had my son when I was 15, I was lucky enough to have the support of my family that helped me finically and emotionally. Unfortunately, this is not the case for everyone. I have seen teen parents my age drop out of school to work minimum wage jobs to support their kids. Most of the time they never go back to finish high school. Now a days, most jobs require a High school diploma. If This legislation were to pass it would ensure that teen parents in need of support have it.

I am a single parent who balances work, school and a toddler. During high school I missed a lot of days due to the lack of childcare and being able to afford it. I did all the work my teachers could send online and just barely passed some classes. If this legislation passes it would offer resources and support to teen parents in need of affordable childcare. Finding childcare is so important as a teen parent because you need to be able to get an education to be able to provide for your kids. The system has been set up to set teen parents to fail, by disowning them, by creating negative annotations about them. We are stong, we are resilient, and we are determined to pull through to get though what we need to do to lock a good future for our kids.

As a teen parents I had all the statics lined up against me. Only 40% of teen high school parents finish high school, I beat this. I graduated high school with the international studies and law award, got into college where I am studding History and Comparative politics and work full time to support myself and my child. I have PEARLS to thank for keeping motivated all throughout high school. PEARLS is a group that gives support to teen parents throughout high school. I was able to accomplish so much with this group imagine what other teen parents would be able to do if they have these type of support groups in thier school.

I was lucky, others are not. I meet amazing students had so much potential to do many great things have to leave school due to lack of support. These people wanted to be doctors, and teachers. But how you succeed in a system that has no interest in you? For far to long we have seen teen parents are misfits, as failures, as all these negative things but we ignore how strong, how determined and how much courage they must but their needs aside and focus on their kids. This is a skill many adult parents lack. A big percentage of teen parents are people of color. Not only are they already Challenged in America because of the color of their skin, now they are failures because of a teen pregnancy. WE need to make sure we are providing the proper support and resources to make sure they can achieve what they need to do. Remember it's not an achievement gap it's the oppportunity gap that fails many students in

Maryland. Providing teen parents with the same resources that regular non teen parents students get would be a set in the right directions

At the end of the day teen parents are parents. We want the same for our kids as those who are much older than us. We want to see our kids happy, healthy and loved. In a system where we have very little to no support sometimes it's hard to keep motivated but it's our kids who help us through the tunnel. I encourage and support this bill because although not everyone can relate, imagine how many lives would be changed. To have the support of being a teen parent and having the pressures of high school takes a slight edge off. Although this legislation would not help me personally anymore, I think off all the teen parents crying on the floor thinking they're not a good enough parent, or the parents who have issues and no help from anyone. I hear them, I stand with them and I want to be able to do anything I can do to help them. because I was that teen parent crying on the floor wondering why I wasn't good enough. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Karely Alcantara

KarelyAlcantara01@gmail.com

9500 Biltmore Dr silver spring MD 20901