

HB0359 - Maryland Longitudinal Database System-Student Data – Pregnant and Parenting Students

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

January 27, 2020 1:00 p.m.

POSITION: SUPPORT

Dear Chair Anne Kaiser and Members of the House Ways and Means 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.¹ There were 2645 births to teenagers under the age of 19 in the state in 2018.² 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.^{3,4} 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.⁵ 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

Public Justice Center

Melissa Rock, Advocates for Children and Youth

Women's Law Center of Maryland

Advocates for Children & Youth

C.R. Valeriann, Baltimore NOW

Jeannette Feldner, Montgomery Country NOW

Maryland NOW

Shamoyia Gardiner, Strong Schools Maryland