

MARY L. WASHINGTON, PH.D  
Legislative District 43  
Baltimore City

Education, Health, and  
Environmental Affairs Committee

*Chair*  
Joint Committee on Ending  
Homelessness

*Chair*  
Joint Committee on Children,  
Youth, and Families



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

*Annapolis Office*  
James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 102  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3145 · 301-858-3145  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3145  
Mary.Washington@senate.state.md.us

**SUPPORT – SB 438**  
**Public Schools - Pregnant and Parenting Students - Policies and Reports**

House Ways and Means Committee  
March 31, 2021  
Testimony of Senator Mary Washington

Chair Kaiser, Vice-Chair Washington and Members of the Committee,

I respectfully urge you to vote favorable on Senate Bill 438, which requires the State Department of Education to establish a model policy to improve the educational outcomes of our 2,000 Maryland students who are pregnant or parenting each year.

The Senate adopted the following amendments to the bill:

- Alters the definition of parenting student – making it clear that a parenting student must be a mother, father or legal guardian;
- Alters the lactation space policy parameters – making it simpler for schools to provide and ensuring that schools are not required to do any capital improvements to comply with requirements;
- Alters the pregnant and parenting student resources provision – requiring schools to designate just one staff member to connect, to the extent practicable, pregnant and parenting students with finding resources.

Currently, 60% of pregnant and parenting students leave school before they graduate and over 60% of the families that they form live below the poverty line. SB438 calls for school districts to create policies to provide reasonable accommodations for these students. Such measures allow students the same opportunities to a rigorous education as their non-parenting peers. SB438 is designed to increase and improve school attendance, participation and graduation rates.

Having established policies at each school to help identify and make connections to existing resources will benefit pregnant, expectant, and parenting students to plan accordingly on how to stay in school and on track to graduate, as well as when circumstances arise that make the balancing act of being both a parent and a student more difficult and/or challenging. Given the well-documented advantages to earning at

least a High School Diploma in the job market, I ask that this committee give SB438 a favorable report in order to increase the odds that parenting students achieve this academic goal and can better provide for themselves and their children.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mary Washington". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Senator Mary Washington, District 43, Baltimore City