

BILL NO.: House Bill 356  
TITLE: Public Institutions of Higher Education – Pregnant and Parenting Students – Policy  
COMMITTEE: Appropriations  
DATE: February 14, 2023  
POSITION: FAVORABLE

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House Bill 356 declares that all students, regardless of their status as parents themselves, are entitled to an education free of discrimination. It would further ensure that colleges and universities to adopt policies related to pregnant and parenting students consistent with Title IX of the Federal Higher Education Act (“Title IX”). Title IX prohibits sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, and gender identity) discrimination in any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. This includes deny benefits or services, discrimination, or otherwise providing unequal educational resources to students based on their sex or gender. These policies would then need to be posted on the institution’s website.

Many young parents are eager to focus on their education. Returning or non-traditional students are also often juggling parenthood and their studies. Unfortunately, though, there are often barriers in place that can thwart students’ abilities to earn their degree. Many schools fail to properly accommodate pregnant or parenting students, and do little to support them in their continued educational pursuits. As a result, becoming pregnant or a parent are major causes of dropping out or failing to complete a degree.

The Women’s Law Center supports all women, regardless of age, socio-economic status, or parenting status and believes in their capacity for growth and success. Education is a key component for ensuring everyone lives up to their potential, and is necessary for full economic independence. HB 356 would further aid pregnant and parenting students by providing the support and opportunities necessary to continue their studies.

For these reasons, the WLC supports HB 356 and urges a favorable report.

***The Women’s Law Center of Maryland is a private, non-profit, membership organization that serves as a leading voice for justice and fairness for women. It advocates for the rights of women through legal assistance to individuals and strategic initiatives to achieve systemic change.***