



FAVORABLE

Dear members of the Maryland House of Delegates Appropriations Committee, on behalf of the undersigned organizations, we urge you to support Senate Bill 341: Public Senior Higher Education Institutions - Reproductive Health Services Plans - Requirements.

According to the National Library of Medicine, 61% of women who have children while enrolled in college drop out before earning a degree. The US Centers for Disease Control reports that college aged people (between 15-24 years old) account for nearly half of all STIs in the country. Despite the documented negative health and academic outcomes associated with sexual health concerns, the remarkable efforts of elected leadership, and the indefatigable advocacy of organizations across the state, most post-secondary institutions still do not prioritize preventive measures related to reproductive health and wellness. As a result, many students across Maryland lack reasonable access to a health center offering the full range of reproductive health services, STI treatment and HIV prevention.

For those folks, seeing a provider, accessing trusted information, and finding the right birth control could mean missed classes, time off from work, hours on public transportation and an egregious medical bill. Limited access to contraception, safe abortions, and other reproductive healthcare services is not only detrimental to educational success, but also promotes systemic inequality since the people who are most at risk for dropping out of college—low-income Americans and racial minorities—are also the ones who are most likely to unexpectedly become pregnant at an early age. These ethnic and socioeconomic disparities will only be exasperated if we don't take immediate action.

It is imperative that Maryland public colleges and universities take a vested interest in helping their students stay in school, graduate, and build a lifetime of opportunity by ensuring that all students have access to a full range of sexual health services as a strategic investment in their collegiate success. SB341 will ensure that policies are put in place to make that a reality.

Signed,

Marylanders for Reproductive Choice

