

BILL NO: Senate Bill 341

TITLE: Public Senior Higher Education Institutions – Reproductive Health Services Plans – Requirements

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy and the Environment

HEARING DATE: February 22, 2023

POSITION: **FAVORABLE**

My name is Jakeya Johnson, I am a graduate student at Bowie State University studying public administration and policy. During my first semester in my masters program, I was assigned a project where we were to identify a public issue and propose a solution based on our research. I decided to examine the issue of reproductive healthcare on college campuses. The CDC reports that 1 in 3 college students did not use a condom in their last sexual encounter. A survey done by the Academy of Communication in Healthcare reports that 38% of college dropouts cite unintended pregnancy as the reason. With these and many other documented risks associated with teen and young adult sexual behaviors, I was surprised to learn how difficult accessing reproductive health services can be for some students. One university referred students to an off campus health center for sexual health services. The health center had operating hours of 8:15am-4:30pm Monday through Friday, and getting there without a personal vehicle would mean an hour and 40 minutes of public transportation. I attempted to call the health center multiple times a day for several days to see if students would need an appointment, but never got a person on the phone.

Many other universities had limited sexual health services, and required either an appointment or counseling just for access to simple over the counter contraceptive options. I met the health center director of one university with the most limited on campus resources and was told that they offer so few sexual health services because students don't use them. This prompted me to survey the students on that campus. Of the students surveyed, 84.3% said that 24/7 access to emergency contraception would be beneficial, while 96% agreed that the university should provide easily accessible information on sexual health and contraception methods. When asked what barriers hinder access to reproductive healthcare, students agreed that cost, transportation, limited health center hours, and a general lack of knowledge were among the most prevalent.

This research has led me to conclude that access to contraception, abortion, health education and other preventive reproductive health services is vital to a successful college experience. SB341 will ensure that college students are equipped with the resources necessary to not only take care of their reproductive health needs, but also achieve personal, educational, and professional goals. That is why I respectfully urge a favorable report on Senate bill 341.

Thank you,

Jakeya Johnson