

SHANEKA HENSON
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Ways and Means Committee

Joint Committee on
Children, Youth, and Families



The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 771

Public Senior Higher Education Institutions - Pregnant and Parenting Students - Policy Requirements (Pregnant and Parenting Support Act)

Chair Ben Barnes
Vice Chair Mark S. Chang
Room 121
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Members of the Appropriations Committee,

I am writing to urge your support for House Bill 771, the Pregnant and Parenting Support Act. As a former teenage mother who navigated the challenges of higher education while raising a child, I understand firsthand the hurdles faced by pregnant and parenting students.

During my sophomore year of college, I discovered I was pregnant. The uncertainty of balancing parenthood with academics was daunting, but with support from loved ones and healthcare professionals, I persevered. This experience ignited my passion to advocate for pregnant and parenting students.

HB 771|SB 741 seeks to ensure that public higher education institutions adopt comprehensive policies supporting pregnant and parenting students. These policies include access to healthcare services and academic accommodations tailored to their needs.

Research shows that prenatal care significantly improves maternal and fetal health outcomes, making it crucial for pregnant students. Additionally, supporting these students is not just a policy issue—it's a moral imperative. Everyone deserves the opportunity to pursue their dreams, regardless of parental status.

By mandating policies outlined in HB 771, we can create a more inclusive educational environment. This includes referral services for essential programs like WIC and childcare assistance, ensuring pregnant and parenting students feel valued, supported, and empowered to succeed.

I urge you to support HB 771 to ensure that every student has the chance to reach their full potential, regardless of their parental status.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "SHANEKA HENSON".

Hon. Delegate Shaneka Henson