



February 27, 2024

**House Bill 657 - Public Institutions of Higher Education-Pregnant and Parenting Students - Policy
House Appropriations Committee**

Position: SUPPORT

The Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY) is an association of private child caring organizations providing foster care, group homes, and other services through more than 200 programs across Maryland. The members of MARFY represent providers who serve Maryland's most vulnerable children who are in out of home placements due to abuse, neglect or severe mental health, and medical needs. We operate group homes, treatment foster care programs and independent living programs, primarily serving the foster care population as well as a juvenile services population.

If passed, this critical piece of legislation mandates all public institutions of higher education in Maryland to establish and implement a policy that supports pregnant and parenting students, in alignment with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. The significance of House Bill 657 cannot be overstated. Education is a right, not a privilege, and it should be accessible to all, regardless of their parenting status or pregnancy. This legislation acknowledges the unique challenges faced by pregnant and parenting students and seeks to eliminate barriers that might hinder their academic success and personal well-being. By requiring institutions to adopt supportive policies and make them publicly accessible, this legislation ensures that the rights of these students are protected, and their needs are met.

Furthermore, the bill reinforces the principle that no student should face discrimination based on their pregnancy or parenting status. It aligns with the core values of equity and inclusion, promoting an educational environment where all students, regardless of their gender or family responsibilities, can succeed. Implementing such policies not only benefits the students directly affected but also enriches the educational community. It fosters a culture of support and

understanding, preparing all students to be compassionate leaders and citizens in a diverse society.

Overall, by supporting House Bill 657, you are not only upholding the rights of pregnant and parenting students but also contributing to the creation of a more inclusive, equitable, and supportive educational system in Maryland. **It is for these reasons we politely ask for a favorable report on House Bill 657.**

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Maryland Association of
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