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Delegate Ben Barnes
Appropriations Committee
Maryland State Legislature
House Office Building
Room 121
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Subject: Letter In Support of House Bill 0463 - Maryland Higher Education Commission –
Demographic Data Collection – Parental Status

Dear Delegate Ben Barnes and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Michaela Martin, JD and I am a parenting student advocate. I led the effort to create and pass legislation in Oregon that required institutions of higher education to collect information regarding parental status of students enrolled in college. Currently, little to no data is collected within Maryland's higher education institutions on student's parental status meaning that they are largely "invisible". The issue is that when you are invisible, so are your problems. Nationally, we know that one in five college students are parenting while also attending college, but they continue to be overlooked and underserved by higher education institutions, data analysts and policymakers nationwide.

I know this to be personally true having been a parenting student the entirety of my college experience from community college as a high school drop out to graduating law school. However, we lack the data necessary to adequately address the barriers and the equity gaps that student parents must face on their journeys to a college degree. I launched the effort to pass legislation for student parent data collection after finding out there was over a two-year waitlist at my community college for on campus childcare. This waitlist meant that I would not be able to access on campus childcare during my time at that institution. I ultimately had the privilege and blessing of my family being able to support my childcare needs, this situation led me to trying to find answers about how many other parenting students could not access needed resources. How many didn't make it to graduation because of this? What could be done to better support student parents? I found that none of that could be meaningfully answered as institutions did not have fundamental information about how many student parents were even on campus or how many made it to graduation.

HB0463 fixes the equity gaps in Maryland by directing the Maryland Higher Education Commission to work with higher education institutions to collect data on the parental status of their students. Better data collection is an essential first step to improving college completion rates for student parents. Without comprehensive data collection on this vital student population, policymakers and institutional leaders struggle to truly understand student parents' experiences and dismantle the barriers impeding their academic and professional success. I support HB 0463 and urge the Appropriations Committee to do so as well.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Michaela Martin

One Pager from Oregon Bill:

<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2021R1/Downloads/PublicTestimonyDocument/2071>

Oregon Senate Bill 564 (2021):

<https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2021R1/Measures/Overview/SB564>