

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 771
Pregnant and Parenting Support Act**

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

RE: FAV HB 771 Pregnant and Parenting Support Act

Chairman Ben Barnes and members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Carmerin Johnson. I am a 30-year-old online student at Post University seeking my degree in Early Childhood Education. As a busy mother of a 4-year-old, 1-year-old, and 1-month-old, I strongly urge you to pass House Bill 771 to support pregnant and parenting students like me.

HB 771 requires Maryland public colleges to have policies supporting pregnant and parenting students. The policies would provide referrals to existing government assistance programs for childcare, access to WIC and nutrition programs, healthcare, and adoption services. They would also offer academic flexibility through priority registration and schedule accommodations. This allows pregnant and parenting students access to resources and accommodations needed to continue pursuing our degrees while managing our responsibilities as parents.

As an Annapolis native raising three young kids while pursuing my online degree, I have battled those barriers firsthand.

The day-to-day grind of juggling school, parenting, and providing is all-consuming. Comforting my crying newborn while trying to comprehend lectures. Cooking dinner with one hand while skimming a textbook with the other. I failed a class last semester overwhelmed by these competing demands.

The economic obstacles only compound matters. Two cans of formula cost me \$100. Without WIC assistance, I've spent upwards of \$200 on this single expense. If I'd received guidance on government nutrition programs from my school under HB771, perhaps I could have instead afforded tuition for classes on campus.

Childcare, healthcare access, and other resources—these referrals mandated by HB771 open doors for student-parents to keep pursuing our purpose. We shouldn't have to choose between nurturing our children and unlocking opportunities through education.

I don't ask for handouts. But access to information and accommodations provides a runway for my efforts to take flight.

Delegate Shaneka Henson lived these struggles as a single-mother attending school. Now she's uplifting mothers like me, statewide, who desire to contribute our talents. Please vote yes on HB771—not for me, but for moms and dads I will empower once I can finish my Early Childhood Education degree. For the young minds I will shape. For the generation I will lift.

This is my dream. This bill grants student-parents the basic tools to achieve our dreams.

Warm regards,

Carmerin Johnson

My name is Carmerin Johnson 30 years old and I attend Post University online. I am from Annapolis. Born and raised.

I Couldn't find child care and had to settle for online classes. The other schools were also too expensive and I didn't know about any scholarships for mother's like me. I have a 4 year old, 1 year, old and 1 month old.

This bill will help because I would have learned more and been able to concentrate better. Instead I have to be in the house with my kids and learn online. I have to attend to my crying baby while also having to hear the lesson online. I'm studying early childhood education. My goal is to open up my own daycare and do homeschool. I have a passion for kids and want to finish school so that I can make a difference in the lives of children. I want to be able to help other parents and mothers. That's why this is important for me to finish school so that I can give back to others that was in my position. I Failed a course last semester because I didn't have support with help with my kids

This bill would help me as a current student. I

With WIC you can get simulate but if you don't receive WIC you have to use SNAP benefit to get baby milk. The cost of the milk is high. I spend \$100 for 2 cans of milk. I spend \$200 a month alone on milk for my 1 month old. If the university could provide me with information on how to get WIC it could help a lot I could go to school on campus and not have to settle for online classed only.

I want to thank Delegate Shaneka Henson for putting forth a bill like this because....