



February 23, 2024

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

**RE: Favorable Testimony – HB771 - Public Senior Higher Education Institutions –
Pregnant and Parenting Students – Del. Henson**

Dear Chair, Vice Chair and Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to come before the Committee to stress the need to pass HB771 the Public Senior Higher Education Pregnant and Parenting Student Bill introduced by Delegate Henson. The Women of Color For Equal Justice is a Maryland based advocacy and litigation center focused on protecting, the rights and civil liberties of all persons, with concentrated focus on the economic, health and workforce needs of women of color.

Support Pregnant and Parenting Students on Maryland College Campuses

Pursuing knowledge and having children—these are two virtues that carry immense social value and should be celebrated. However, regrettably, it is more often the case, modern society holds them in conflict with one another. More than one in five college students—or 22 percent of all undergraduates—are parents, according to an analysis of data from the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study.¹ Of the 3.8 million students who are raising children while in college, roughly 2.7 million (or 70 percent) are mothers and 1.1 million (30 percent) are fathers ([Figure 1](#)). Moreover, Student parents are more likely than students without children to be students of color: 51% compared with 46 percent of students without children. Looking across racial/ethnic backgrounds, Black college students are the most likely to be parents (33 percent), and Black women — two in five of whom are mothers — are more likely than women from other backgrounds to be raising children while in college.

In addition, over half (1/2) of all student parents dropout before earning their degree according to a report by the [US Government Accountability Office \(GAO\)](#), of the 4.3 million student parents in the nation as of , 52% percent of them dropout of college before earning their degree. Despite the fact that student parents often get better grades than their non-parent peers and that they're more motivated to succeed, some face barriers that may be difficult to overcome.

Pregnant students should not be faced with the dilemma that their academic and future success must be sacrificed to an unplanned pregnancy. Data shows that carrying a child to term does not have to hinder one's educational journey. As a woman who understands the strength and resilience of other

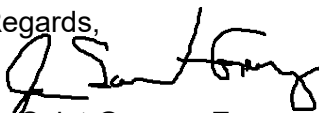
¹ Source: IWPR analysis of data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2015-16 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS:16) and Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Spring 2001 through Spring 2017, Fall Enrollment component.

women, I found it unsurprising that student mothers outperform their childless peers in the classroom. With more people entering college at every station of life, it is critical that we pass the Pregnant and Parenting Student Act. All students should know their rights and protections available to them, including all existing resources that can have a profound impact on parenting students.

One of the most pressing needs that students who are pregnant or parenting face, include on campus and near campus child-care. Consequently, HB771 - which mandates that all Maryland higher education institutions create policies for making resources available to students who are pregnant or parenting so that they can parent and attend school successfully – is big step in the right direction in supporting Marylander Pregnant and Parenting Students.

We request a favorable report!

Regards,



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