

KENNETH P. KERR, ED.D
Legislative District 3
Frederick County

Health and Government Operations
Committee

Subcommittees

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Health Facilities

Insurance and Pharmaceuticals



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Annapolis Office
The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 209
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3240 · 301-858-3240
800-492-7122 Ext. 3240
Ken.Kerr@house.state.md.us

District Office
4539 Metropolitan Court, Suite 257
Frederick, Maryland 21704
301-360-3505

Good afternoon Delegate Ben Barnes and Members of the Appropriations Committee, I am here to present bill **HB 0463 Maryland Higher Education Commission – Demographic Data Collection – Parental Status**, which proposes to collect data about students who are also parenting children during their undergraduate and graduate school years.

While it was once a rare occurrence, the Women’s Movement, the economy, and other social trends have resulted in large numbers of young adults attending college while they are raising young children. Nationwide, 1 in 5 undergraduate students and 1 in 3 graduate students are parenting while in college. There are numerous articles on tips and pointers to help parents overcome the challenges of managing two of life’s most significant and important responsibilities. We can surmise what young parenting college students need to be successful at simultaneous parenthood and post-secondary education. It is clear that we need more information directly from people managing both areas of life if they are to be successful parents and student.

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.

Supporting student parents is a matter of racial and social justice. Student parents are more likely to be students of color and to live at or below the poverty line than their non-parenting peers. The unique challenges faced by student parents are not only due to their parental status, but also due to the many intersecting identities that impact their journeys to and through higher education. Supporting student parent success will help the state of Maryland reach its goals in student retention and graduation rates for Pell-eligible students and students of color.

A report released by Maryland Higher Education Commission in September 2023 indicated that not many colleges are collecting this data on a routine basis, and those that do have not assembled the information necessary to develop a comprehensive picture student-parent life.. The commission recommends that better data collection is needed to understand the full needs of this unique, and often overlooked, population.

HB 463 will make it possible to assemble comprehensive information about a significant student parenting population. National data suggests that more than 70,000 Marylanders are parenting while attending college part- or full-time. This bill aims to

capture information about parenting students, which will increase awareness of the unique barriers they face so that programs can be designed to meet their needs and increase the likelihood of their success. For instance, here in Anne Arundel County, Anne Arundel Community College, one of the most successful community colleges in the country, has an on-site childcare center. The center serves two important purposes—providing care for the children of students and offering a hands-on learning environment for students on the school's early childhood education program.

Through bill HB 463, State and institutional policymakers and leaders will access to data that more accurately reflects the unique challenges and opportunities that are relevant to student parents. And policymakers at every level will be empowered to make informed decisions and provide targeted support for this often-overlooked population. Student parents deserve to be recognized and supported so that they can succeed in higher education and beyond.

I urge the Appropriations Committee to support HB 0463 so that Maryland can continue to be a leader in higher education. Thank you for your time and consideration.