

# Pro-Choice Maryland Action

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## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 527: Community Colleges - Contraception - Access Requirements

TO: Chair Ben Barnes and Members of the House Appropriations Committee

FROM: Pro-Choice Maryland Action

DATE: March 20, 2024

Pro-Choice Maryland Action 501(c)(4) is an independent, nonprofit organization that develops and advocates for policies that protect reproductive freedom and that advance reproductive justice, including support and services for those who have children. Pro-Choice Maryland Action **strongly supports Senate Bill 527 as a means of promoting access to contraception for students at Maryland community colleges.**

Community colleges serve an important purpose in Maryland's educational ecosystem. They serve as a springboard to career opportunities and a gateway to further higher education if desired. People of all ages enroll in Maryland's community colleges to take advantage of these opportunities at a much lower tuition cost than a four-year institution. Programs such as Maryland Community College Promise are an important lifeline for young people who may not otherwise be able to afford to continue their education after high school. One can expect that as programs like this expand, enrollment in Maryland's community colleges will continue to grow. The Maryland Higher Education Commission projects that enrollment in community colleges will increase by 26% between 2019 and 2029.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, community colleges serve diverse communities. According to the Maryland Association of Community Colleges, 57% of community college students in 2022 were people of color, 61% of students were women, and 30% of students were non-traditionally aged students over the age of 25.<sup>2</sup>

Pro-Choice Maryland believes it is a fundamental human right to determine whether, when, and how to have children, and to be able to parent one's children in a safe and sustainable community. Students enrolled in Maryland's community colleges deserve access to contraception without concerns about its cost. When students are able to prevent unwanted pregnancy, they are free to focus on their educational goals. An unplanned pregnancy can derail a student's educational career, while access to contraception promotes students' ability to finish their

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<https://mhec.maryland.gov/About/SiteAssets/Lists/Meeting%20Agendas%20and%20Agenda%20Books/EditForm/2020%20Enrollment%20Projections%20Report%202020%20-%202029.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://mdacc.org/macc-facts/>

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degrees and continue on as productive members of the labor force. Completion of community college also promotes the financial well-being of graduates. Any children a student chooses to have later in life will benefit from their parent's increased educational attainment.

For the aforementioned reasons, **we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 527.**