



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 27, 2024

House Bill 657

**Public Institutions of Higher Education - Pregnant and Parenting Students -
Policy**

House Appropriations Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

House Bill 657 requires each public institution of higher education to adopt a policy related to pregnant and parenting students that is consistent with Title IX; and requiring each public institution of higher education to post the policy on the institutions website.

In Maryland, nearly 55,000 students, constituting one-fifth of undergraduates, are parents. Student parents, often older, financially independent, highly motivated, and achieving better grades than their dependent peers, face significant challenges. However, a notable disparity exists, with just 8% of single-mother undergraduates earning an A.A. or B.A. within six years of college enrollment, compared to 49% of non-mothers.¹

For student parents, particularly single mothers, a fundamental obstacle to education is the lack of awareness about their Title IX rights for campus accommodations. Among the state's 31 public colleges and universities, only a quarter provide information about Title IX rights for pregnant and parenting students on their websites. Moreover, 60% of public colleges do not list lactation spaces for breastfeeding mothers. The absence of this crucial information may lead to college dropout, discrimination, or a perception of unsupportiveness, hindering rather than facilitating college success. Notably, women of color are disproportionately affected, with 31% of Black women, 17% of mixed-race women, and 16% of Latinas in college being mothers, compared to 13% of White and 7% of Asian/Pacific Islander female students.²

¹ <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Maryland.pdf>

² https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/C481_Parents-in-College-By-the-Numbers-Aspen-Ascend-and-IWPR.pdf

Recognizing the challenges faced by student parents, especially women of color, is crucial. Pregnancy support services play a vital role in assisting women throughout their pregnancies and the early stages of parenting. House Bill 657 is a significant step toward ensuring that pregnant and parenting students in higher education have increased opportunities for success.

For these reasons, the MCC asks for a favorable report on **HB 657**.

Thank you for your consideration.