

Committees: Appropriations

Testimony on: HB0657

Positions: Favorable

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and the members of the Appropriations Committee,

The University of Maryland, with the Sexual Misconduct Prevention Committee in Student Government Association, supports HB0657 in requiring public higher education institutions to implement a non-discriminatory policy for pregnant students. We believe that it is vital that all students, regardless of parenting or pregnancy status, be provided equal access and opportunity.

As Director of Sexual Misconduct Prevention at the University of Maryland's Student Government Association and as Chair of the Title IX Advisory Board, I am knowledgeable about the Title IX policies and their processes. I have continued to work with UMD's Title IX to promote their policies, like those protecting parenting and pregnant students. Through my position and my conversations with the general student body, I can attest that many students are unaware that Title IX also encompasses rights for pregnant and parenting students. Title IX provides provisions for public institutions of higher education to implement to prevent discrimination based on gender does not occur. Due to the added stress and vulnerability of these classes of students, it is essential that public institutions of higher education ensure a safe environment to foster learning and engagement. If subject to discrimination or harassment, which is highly probable considering historic discrimination surrounding pregnant and parenting individuals, these individuals need not face additional stress in locating their rights.

HB657 would simplify the process of helping pregnant and parenting individuals in locating their rights by requiring that public institutions ensure that their policy is consistent with Title IX regulations and that the policy is included on the institution's website. By placing these clear expectations, students can be confident of their protections and rights provided by Title IX. If these individuals feel they have been denied equal treatment and equal opportunity based on their pregnancy and parental status, one of the first resources would be the institution's Title IX policy. Finding and seeking help for these issues should be made as simple and easy for a student who is already in need of help. Individuals facing discrimination and are unaware of their Title IX protections should not be disadvantaged in seeking support and exploring their rights. The institution has an obligation to provide students with the full extent of their policies.

I respectfully request a favorable vote on HB365.

Thank you,

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