

Bill Number: HB367

Title: Community Colleges - Contraception - Access Requirements

Committee: Education Energy and the Environment

Hearing Date: 02/14/2024

Position: FAVORABLE

My name is Kateryna Choma-Knapp and I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 367, titled "Community Colleges - Contraception - Access Requirements", which addresses the critical need for on-campus access to over-the-counter contraceptives at Maryland community colleges. As an advocate with a deep understanding of the importance of reproductive health access for students, this legislation is crucial for the well-being and academic success of individuals attending Maryland community colleges. Maryland community college students face barriers to accessing contraceptives, which impacts their reproductive health decisions, educational prospects, and overall well-being. House Bill 367 aims to address this issue by ensuring convenient access to over-the-counter contraceptives during all operating hours. The impact on students is significant— 61 percent of community college students who have children after enrolling do not finish their education. That dropout rate is 65% higher than the rate of non-pregnant or parenting students. By providing on-campus access to over-the-counter contraceptives, we can empower students to make informed reproductive health choices. I believe this legislation will positively impact their overall well-being, academic success, and future goals by removing barriers to accessing essential healthcare.

As a pro-choice advocate here in Maryland, I have met with and heard many first-hand stories from numerous women who have, very sadly, had to drop out of college and miss out on educational and career opportunities that would have been great assets to their families due to not having convenient access to contraception. There are several students who must work and go to school and may also depend on public transportation. They run on very tight schedules to make it to work and classes on time. By providing contraception at community colleges, we will be following the footsteps of what has already been put in place here in Maryland in four-year colleges and universities. Access to contraception should be a human right meant not for the few and those able to afford it, but to all.

In conclusion, House Bill 367 is a vital piece of legislation that addresses a significant gap in reproductive health access for Maryland community college students. By addressing the challenges related to unplanned pregnancies, this bill has the potential to positively impact retention rates and contribute to the well-being, success, and prospects of countless individuals pursuing education in our state. For these reasons, I strongly urge a favorable report on HB367.