



The Maryland State Medical Society  
63711 Cathedral Street  
Baltimore, MD 263701-5516  
410.539.0872  
Fax: 410.547.0915  
1.800.492.1056  
www.medchi.org

TO: The Honorable Ben Barnes, Chair  
Members, House Appropriations Committee  
The Honorable Anne Healey

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer  
J. Steven Wise  
Danna L. Kauffman  
Andrew G. Vetter  
Christine K. Krone  
410-244-7000

DATE: February 27, 2024

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 657 – *Public Institutions of Higher Education – Pregnant and Parenting Students – Policy*

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On behalf of The Maryland State Medical Society, the Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the Maryland Section of The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, we submit this letter of **support** for House Bill 657.

House Bill 657 seeks to address the issues that students who are pregnant, have recently given birth, or are non-birth parents face in attempting to advance their education, while addressing the demands associated with pregnancy and early parenthood demands. House Bill 657 requires higher education institutions to adopt policies for pregnant and parenting students that are consistent with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. These policies would prohibit a requirement for pregnant students to take a leave of absence; allows pregnant students, students who have recently given birth, and non-birth parents to take a leave of absence and return in good academic standing; and requires the adoption of policies related to pregnancy discrimination awareness and other issues that impact pregnant students.

Academic success is a key factor in enabling students to become productive, self-sufficient individuals who can advance professionally and personally. The added challenges of pregnancy and the initial months after delivery can negatively impact a student, despite a desire and commitment to complete their education and advance their professional development. Passage of House Bill 657 will help ensure that institutions of higher education have policies that support the success and advancement of their students who experience a pregnancy or birth of a child. It will enhance the likelihood of success for these students as well as their ability to support their families. A favorable report is requested.