

Bill Number: SB527

Title: Community Colleges - Contraception - Access Requirements

Committee: Health and Government

Hearing Date: 02/13/2024

Position: **FAVORABLE**

My name is Dr. Judy Stone; I am a member of MMARF and I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 527, 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 a physician in rural Maryland, 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.

Senate Bill 527 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 physician, I have seen the consequences of unsafe abortions and complications of even desperately wanted pregnancies and deliveries. Women should be readily able to avoid unintended pregnancies.

In conclusion, Senate Bill 527 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 SB527.

