

Bill Number: SB527

Title: Community Colleges - Contraception - Access Requirements

Committee: Education, Energy and the Environment

Hearing Date: 02/14/2024

Submitted by: Cresta Kowalski, Chairperson, Mountain Maryland Alliance for Reproductive Freedom

Position: FAVORABLE

In Mountain Maryland, we are lucky to have students from across our state that come West for college. At Allegany College of Maryland, with an attendance of 3,184 students in 2022-2023, 54.3% of the student population are from Maryland. At Garrett College, 82% of the student population are Maryland residents. The responsibilities we have as members of the communities where these students live and learn are great; one of the responsibilities we have is access to reproductive healthcare including emergency contraception.

It is imperative that college students have opportunities to make choices for themselves in all areas, and this includes the bodily autonomy and reproductive choice. To increase access to emergency contraception at community colleges will increase opportunities for students to continue their education. According to the American Association of Community Colleges, 7% of community college dropouts leave because of an unplanned pregnancy. Nationally, this rate is 1 in 10 dropouts among female students at community colleges. Without access to emergency contraception, we are negatively impacting the futures of females at a disproportionate rate than that of males attending colleges. This inequity is unacceptable.

Our community college students need support, especially in a rural area like Mountain Maryland where transportation is a luxury. If there is a need for emergency contraception, transportation can be a barrier for some students, leading to an unplanned pregnancy. Furthermore, if access to reproductive healthcare and education were more readily available on community college campuses, our students would be able to make informed decisions about their needs and wants.

The use of emergency contraception can prevent up to 95% of pregnancies if taken 5 days after intercourse according to the World Health Organization. (<https://shorturl.at/enzMZ> ) If Maryland wants to enable people who do not want to be pregnant the autonomy of choice, and decrease the need for surgical abortions-which many people still oppose- increasing access to emergency contraception is the only way.

For these reasons, I urge a favorable vote on this bill.