



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 14th, 2024

SB527: Community Colleges - Contraception - Access Requirements

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, Members of the EEE Committee,

SB527 *Community Colleges - Contraception - Access Requirements* is the follow-up to Chair Feldman's SB341 which was enacted last year to expand access to reproductive health services at 4-year public colleges and universities.

SB527 comes directly from a thoughtful question about access to contraception at community colleges asked by Vice Chair Kagan at the hearing for last year's bill. I'm appreciative she is co-sponsoring this bill with me.

This year's bill would provide equitable access to contraceptives for community college students, who tend to be older than four-year college students and juggle more competing priorities with work and family obligations.

Community colleges have a lower completion rate of 43.4% when compared to the 67.4% completion rate for public 4-year schools. Importantly, 61% of students who have unplanned pregnancies while studying in community colleges do not complete their programs. The gaps in completion rates between four-year and two-year institutions can be narrowed with the addition of contraceptive resources on campus for students who need them.

SB527 is similar to the bill this committee passed last year, but **appropriately modified for community colleges which are non-residential and do not generally have health centers on campus**. It ensures community college campuses in Maryland provide access to over-the-counter contraception during class hours.

This would ensure our community college students have access to:

- Condoms
- Emergency contraception ("Plan B" and other generics)
- Over-the-counter birth control "Opill"

This legislation allows each campus the flexibility to determine how to provide this access, from utilizing campus stores to vending machines. The *American Society for Emergency Contraception* has compiled a list of over-the-counter contraceptive suppliers that offer a discounted rate for schools.

As with last year's bill for four year campuses, this bill also authorizes the Department of Health to provide technical assistance to community colleges in partnership with a non-profit organization with expertise in the area. As a result of last year's legislation, the Department of Health is already collaborating with the *American Society of Emergency Contraception* to provide technical assistance to campuses across Maryland on vending machines.

The bill also requires that the community colleges must work with students on bill implementation to ensure student needs are met and provides for a simple reporting requirement from the community colleges to the Maryland Higher Education Commission.

Today, you will hear from Reproductive Justice Maryland Executive Director Jakeya Johnson, Robyn Elliot on behalf of the Women's Law Center of Maryland and the American College of Nurse Midwives, as well as Victoria Nichols representing Ibis Reproductive Health in her role as Project Director of Free The Pill.

Thank you for your time today, and I urge a favorable report on SB527.