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HB0771

February 27, 2024

**TO:** Members of the House Appropriations Committee

**FROM:** Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

**RE:** House Bill 771 – Public Senior Higher Education Institutions - Pregnant and Parenting Students - Policy Requirements (Pregnant and Parenting Support Act)

**POSITION: FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill (HB) 771 **with amendments**.

HB 771 requires public senior higher education institutions to adopt a policy regarding pregnant and parenting students. The policy must include referral to on- or off-campus services for certain government assistance programs, adoption services, institutional accommodations, and health care. This supports the federal civil rights law, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which protects people from discrimination or denial of benefits in education programs that receive federal financial assistance.<sup>i</sup> However, as written, it misses two crucial groups of pregnant and parenting students: pregnant students who do not wish to remain pregnant, and parenting students who want to avoid future pregnancies. We recommend amendments to ensure these groups' needs are addressed.

Being pregnant or parenting while in school can pose significant challenges to students' academic success and potentially lead to dropping out.<sup>ii,iii</sup> Research shows that students with children are almost twice as likely as their peers to leave college before earning their degree.<sup>iii</sup> Top causes include time pressures (insufficient time to work, study, and provide for family), lack of affordable childcare, and high tuition costs.<sup>iii</sup> The policies required by this bill will help address these challenges and ensure that Maryland's public higher education institutions are hospitable environments for pregnant and parenting students.

It is important to recognize that some parenting students may wish to avoid future pregnancies. Similarly, some students who are pregnant may wish to terminate their pregnancies. As such, **we recommend the policies required by this bill also include referral to contraceptive services and abortion services**. This should be simple for institutions, as § 15-136 of the Education Article requires public senior higher education institutions to develop and implement reproductive health service plans including provision of or referrals to contraceptive and abortion services.<sup>iv</sup> The policies required by HB 771 should include these services, ensuring that pregnant and parenting students looking for reproductive health resources can find them.

For these reasons, the BCA respectfully request a **favorable with amendments** report on HB 771.

<sup>i</sup> US Department of Health and Human Services. (2021). Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Retrieved from <https://www.hhs.gov/civil-rights/for-individuals/sex-discrimination/title-ix-education-amendments/index.html>

<sup>ii</sup> Sonfield, A., Hasstedt, K., Kavanaugh, M., & Anderson, R. (2013). The Social and Economic Benefits of Women's Ability To Determine Whether and When to Have Children. The Guttmacher Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/pubs/social-economic-benefits.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> Contreras-Mendez, S. & Reichlin Cruse, L. Busy with Purpose: Lessons for Education and Policy Leaders from Returning Student Parents. Institute for Women's Policy Research. Retrieved from <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Busy-With-Purpose-v2b.pdf>

<sup>iv</sup> MD Code, Education, § 15-136, MD EDUC § 15-136. Retrieved from [https://govt.westlaw.com/mdc/Document/N6F5409F0097B11EEA936FDB90ACDA3A?viewType=FullText&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=CategoryPageItem&contextData=\(sc.Default\)&bhcp=1](https://govt.westlaw.com/mdc/Document/N6F5409F0097B11EEA936FDB90ACDA3A?viewType=FullText&originationContext=documenttoc&transitionType=CategoryPageItem&contextData=(sc.Default)&bhcp=1)