



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 19, 2025

Senate Bill 511

**Public Senior Higher Education Institutions - Pregnant and Parenting Students -
Plan Requirements (Pregnant and Parenting Student Support Act)
Senate Education, Energy, and the environment Committee**

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

Senate Bill 511 requires certain public senior higher education institutions to adopt a plan regarding pregnant and parenting students to include referral to on-campus or off-campus services to assist regarding the availability of or eligibility for certain government assistance programs and any other programs, scholarships, or subsidies that may be available for pregnant and parenting students; and requiring each public senior higher education institution to post the plan on the institution's website on or before August 1, 2026.

In Maryland, nearly 70,000 students, constituting one-fifth of undergraduates, are parents.¹ Student parents, often older, financially independent, highly motivated, and achieving better grades than their dependent peers, face significant challenges. However, a notable disparity exists, with just 8% of single-mother undergraduates earning an A.A. or B.A. within six years of college enrollment, compared to 49% of non-mothers.²

For student parents, particularly single mothers, a fundamental obstacle to education is the lack of awareness about their Title IX rights for campus accommodations. Among the state's 31 public colleges and universities, only a quarter provide information about Title IX rights for pregnant and parenting students on their websites. Moreover, 60% of public colleges do not list lactation spaces for breastfeeding mothers. The absence of this crucial information may lead to

¹ <https://www.generationhope.org/our-stories/maryland-advocacy-student-parent-data-collection#:~:text=Based%20on%20national%20data%2C%20we,%2C%20data%20analysts%2C%20and%20policymakers.>

² <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Maryland.pdf>

college dropout, discrimination, or a perception of unsupportiveness, hindering rather than facilitating college success. Notably, women of color are disproportionately affected, with 31% of Black women, 17% of mixed-race women, and 16% of Latinas in college being mothers, compared to 13% of White and 7% of Asian/Pacific Islander female students.³

Pregnancy support services play a vital role in assisting women throughout their pregnancies and the early stages of parenting. Parenting students seek higher education to obtain better paying careers and ensuring adequate campus support is essential to ensure parents obtain their degrees without sacrificing their parental responsibilities. If parents and their children are eligible for government subsidies, they should be able to obtain these services to continue to provide for themselves and their children. This legislation seeks to affirm life that is welcomed by parenting students and provide enhanced support services for parents to raise healthy families and maintain educational success.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **SB 511**.

Thank you for your consideration.

³ https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/C481_Parents-in-College-By-the-Numbers-Aspen-Ascend-and-IWPR.pdf