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Senator Brian Feldman
Education, Energy & Environment Committee
Maryland State Legislature
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Subject: SUPPORT for House Bill 0298 – Maryland Higher Education Commission –
Demographic Data Collection – Parental Status**

Dear Chair Brian Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy & Environment Committee,

My name is Marlee Breakstone and I am writing today to express my strong support for HB 0298, critical legislation that would require institutions of higher education throughout Maryland to collect data on the parenting status of their students. As a policy professional committed to helping underserved populations thrive, I am committed to supporting policies like HB 0298 that enable the one in five undergraduate students and one in three graduate students nationwide who are raising children while attending college to gain both recognition and support from their institutions.

Comprehensive data collection will enable policymakers and institutional leaders throughout Maryland to identify and address common obstacles, often rooted in racial and economic disparities, that hinder academic success for student parents. Supporting student parents is both a matter of equity and a key strategy for achieving Maryland's retention and graduation goals for students of color and Pell-eligible students. The 2023 Maryland Higher Education Commission [Report on Advising Systems and Wrap-around Services](#) revealed that few institutions collect comprehensive data on student parents. Without accurate demographic information, it's impossible to fully understand students' needs or craft policies that promote their success.

It's important to note that this legislation would cost nothing to implement, as it would simply require institutions to collect an additional data point using systems and programs that they already utilize. It is as simple as adding an additional question to a student survey. This addition would have multigenerational positive impacts, affecting both parenting students and their families. I am honored and privileged to have had the opportunity to form meaningful professional and personal relationships with current and former student parents and have seen first-hand the profound impacts that policy changes aimed at supporting their specific needs can have on their lives and the lives of their children and families.

Passing HB 0298 will ensure the state of Maryland and its many great colleges and universities have the tools and information needed to support the estimated 70,000 Marylanders who are student parents. By addressing their unique challenges, Maryland can be a leader in fostering student success and equity in higher education. I respectfully urge the Education, Energy & Environment Committee to support HB 0298 and take this vital step toward creating a more inclusive and supportive educational environment for student parents. It is the right thing to do.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Marlee Breakstone