

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in favor of HB 0298.

My name is Dr. Anne Hofmann, and I am a Professor of English and the Chair of the English and Humanities Department at Frederick Community College. As is the case at most community colleges, many of my students are adult learners who are raising a family and working full-time.

For those unfamiliar with the incredible prevalence and cost of caregiving and attending college, I will share these powerful statistics:

- It is estimated that 20% of US College students are parenting while trying to earn a degree, AND
- “Nearly 70 percent of two-year college students with dependents are living at or below 200 percent of poverty” (Gault et al 3).
- Community colleges and regional 4 year public institutions serve more of these students because they are typically the most affordable and geographically accessible options for people who are tied to the locations of their families.

I understand this struggle first hand: I was a parenting student who graduated with my PhD from The University of Maryland, College Park last Spring while raising 2 children as a single mother. It took me eight years, (driving back and forth from Frederick to College Park weekly) to earn my degree. I received no targeted support, and I want this to be different for my students.

My PhD research on parenting students at community colleges reveals that parenting students experience financial burdens, scheduling problems, and intense psychosocial stress that increases the rate of dropout and the increased accrual of personal debt. However, programmatic interventions like FCC’s Parents Lead that identify and support parenting students in unique ways leads to exponential return on investment with completion rates that

exceed those of the general college-going population. In short, parenting students are among the most motivated and the most successful when supported because they are working to improve their children's lives, not just their own.

I testify today without hesitation that House Bill 0298 is the first step in helping hundreds of Maryland families earn the credentials to make a living wage in our state. Without the data that tells us which students and which institutions are serving parenting students, resourcing them is impossible. I'll add that this bill carries no fiscal note, yet the benefits it will provide for students and families in Maryland is profound. I urge the legislature to consider this bill essential to the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future and as a necessary component for helping public colleges and universities identify and support the parenting students.

NOTE: My testimony does not represent the opinion or viewpoint of Frederick Community College or their leadership, and my testimony is provided as a member of the public based on personal expertise or interest.