

HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

February 12, 2025

**HB 359 – Prince George’s County – Early Childhood Education
Program, High School Child Care Centers, and Fee in Child Support
Cases – Established
Position: SUPPORT**

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM) is the protection and advocacy organization for the state of Maryland; the mission of the organization, part of a national network of similar agencies, is to advocate for the legal rights of people with disabilities throughout the state. Over the years, DRM has focused significant effort on both representation of older students with disabilities who are preparing to exit the school system and on addressing the systemic barriers that have prevented many students with disabilities from accessing vocational and technical programs that would prepare them for successful careers. DRM supports **House Bill 359**, which would require certain public high schools in Prince George’s County to offer students a career and technical education program in early childhood education, as well as establish childcare centers to provide care for students with young children.

HB 359 would require public high schools in Prince George’s County where the pregnancy rate is greater than 1%, to provide a childcare center, a career and technical education program in early childhood education care, and to register student-parents with Child Resource Connect services offered by the County. Childcare centers within high schools are an effective measure towards combatting chronic absenteeism and increasing graduation rates.¹ This bill is an important step towards supporting students to navigate

¹ <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/strategies-and-solutions/what-works-for-health/strategies/high-school-completion-programs-for-pregnant-and-parenting-teens>

the challenges of teen pregnancy while still working towards high school graduation.

This bill would also require Prince George's County public schools that meet the criteria for the establishment of a childcare center to ensure students are provided with career and technical education programming in early childhood education. Students with disabilities are uniquely poised to benefit from these hands-on learning opportunities. Work-based learning opportunities help students to make connections with potential employers, explore different career opportunities prior to graduation or certificate achievement, and develop skills that are necessary to succeed in the workplace. They also provide students with disabilities insight into determining the need for accommodations and practical experience navigating how to identify and request certain supports. By providing support for students with disabilities to engage in work-based learning, this bill opens doors for future success in employment.

Respectfully submitted,

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