

WRITTEN TESTIMONY FOR SB 420

Bill: SB 420 – Public Institutions of Higher Education – Pregnant and Parenting Students – Plan and Reporting

Committee: House Appropriations

Position: Favorable with Amendments

To Chair Barnes and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

I am writing to urge a favorable report on SB 420 with a specific amendment to ensure the long-term visibility and success of parenting students in Maryland's higher education system.

SB 420 represents a critical evolution of the *Pregnant and Parenting Student Support Act*. By expanding these requirements to include our community colleges and shifting to a data-driven regulatory process under MHEC, this bill acknowledges that we cannot support a student population we do not accurately count.

As the Director of Student Success and Retention at Frederick Community College, I have seen the impact of data for all student populations but especially parenting students. Too often parenting students are an invisible population. It is impossible to really gauge the needs of this student population without data. Parenting students face many barriers to their success including childcare, a lack of flexible scheduling for academic programs and course offerings, and other financial barriers. We cannot know the barriers they are facing and the support they really need without being able to identify this population. To effectively advocate for parenting students' needs and build support systems that truly impact their success, data is essential. By utilizing parenting student data at Frederick Community College, we have successfully advocated for a dedicated student experience staff member for parenting students, the creation of a Family Study Space, and many other specific initiatives designed to make FCC more family-friendly and support of the parenting student population.

I strongly support the current amendments that:

- **Streamline Data Collection:** Moving the definition of "parenting student" to a regulatory process allows MHEC to work directly with institutions to develop flexible, effective, and standardized data collection timeframes.
- **Focus on Essential Services:** By removing outdated language regarding adoption referrals, the bill centers its focus on the immediate, high-impact needs of students—such as childcare, lactation spaces, and government assistance navigation (WIC, SNAP).

Requested Amendment: However, I respectfully ask the Committee to reject the striking of the language "each September 1 thereafter" on page 3, lines 3-4. The current version of the bill risks making the reporting of this vital demographic data a one-time event. For Maryland to truly

understand the "politics of care" and the barriers to completion for student parents, this reporting must be annual. Consistent data is the only way to measure the impact of our policies and ensure that student parents—who often face the highest risks of stopping out—remain a priority in our state's equity goals.

By restoring the annual reporting requirement, this committee ensures that the "visibility" created by SB 420 is not temporary, but a permanent fixture of our commitment to student success.

I urge a favorable report on SB 420 with the inclusion of the annual reporting requirement.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Ricketts

Michelle Ricketts

Director of Student Success & Retention

Annapolis Hall, A-103A

Phone: 301-624-2707 | Email: mricketts@frederick.edu

Frederick Community College | 7932 Opossumtown Pike Frederick, MD 21702

Pronouns: she/her/hers