

# **Testimony in favor of SB 0420.pdf**

Uploaded by: Anne Hofmann

Position: FAV

# Testimony in Support of SB 0420

**TO:** The Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

**FROM:** Dr. Anne Hofmann, Professor of English and Cultural Studies, Frederick Community College

**DATE:** February 5, 2026

**RE: SUPPORT for SB 0420** – Higher Education - Pregnant and Parenting Students - Data Collection and Concrete Supports

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## Formal Statement

Good afternoon, Chair and members of the Committee. My name is Dr. Anne Hofmann. I am a Professor of English and Cultural Studies at Frederick Community College, and I am here today as a member of the public and a former single mother who earned my PhD at College Park while raising two children. I navigated eight years of doctoral study in a system that offered no targeted support. I urge a **favorable report on SB 0420**.

## Argument for Support

**SB 0420** is a critical amendment to the Pregnant and Parenting Student Support Act (HB 0840) that passed last year and is now Maryland law. While the previous legislation established the foundation by requiring institutions to post plans, **SB 0420** ensures equity by requiring these concrete supports at all public institutions.

It formalizes the data collection necessary to make these families "visible." Without this data, we cannot evaluate effectiveness or outcomes. I want to clarify that referrals and plan requirements are already law; this bill simply ensures those services reach the students who already qualify. You cannot connect a student to a resource if you do not know they exist.

## The Impact of Visibility

In higher education, we say: you cannot support student parents if you do not know who they are. Currently, 20% of U.S. college students are parenting, and nearly 70% of those at community colleges live at or below 200% of the poverty line.

Despite these challenges, my own research proves that when we know which institutions and programs house the most parenting students and provide programmatic interventions, these students achieve completion rates that actually exceed the general college-going population. This is good for children, families, and Maryland's economy.

## **Fiscal Responsibility**

Research from IWPR shows that investing in Maryland's student parents yields a massive fiscal return. For every \$1 invested, the return to the state ranges from \$7 to over \$9. For example, a single mother in Maryland who earns a bachelor's degree contributes nearly \$245,000 more in lifetime taxes and saves the state over \$41,000 in public assistance costs. These are net gains to our state, not liabilities.

## **Conclusion**

**SB 0420** moves us from "plans on a website" to data-driven results that empower Maryland families to thrive. I testify today without hesitation that this bill is a vital step for equity, and I urge a **favorable report**.

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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.

**SB0420\_FAV\_MDACOG\_Pub. Institutions Higher Ed. - P**

Uploaded by: Christine Krone

Position: FAV



**Maryland Section**

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

February 10, 2026

Senate Bill 420 – *Public Institutions of Higher Education – Pregnant and Parenting Students – Plan and Reporting*

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Maryland Section (MD ACOG), which represents the Maryland physicians who serve the obstetrical and gynecological needs of Maryland women and their families, **supports** Senate Bill 420.

Senate Bill 420 would require the Maryland Higher Education Commission and public institutions of higher education to collect demographic data on students' parental status and to adopt comprehensive plans to support pregnant and parenting students. This approach aligns with ACOG's commitment to improving maternal and child health outcomes.

Pregnancy and parenting are significant life events with profound health, economic, and educational implications. Students who are pregnant or caring for children often face unique barriers that jeopardize their academic success, economic stability, and health. Pregnant and parenting students often face elevated stress, significant caregiving responsibilities, financial insecurity, and interruptions to their education, which together contribute to lower retention and higher dropout rates than those experienced by their non-parenting peers. Yet, many higher education institutions lack systematic data on the number and needs of these students or formal policies to ensure they can remain enrolled and succeed. Without accurate demographic information and clear institutional plans, the true scope of these challenges remains invisible and under-addressed.

This bill represents an important step toward ensuring that pregnant and parenting students in Maryland's public higher education institutions have the institutional support necessary to remain enrolled, complete their degrees, and care for themselves and their families. For these reasons, MD ACOG respectfully urges the Committee's favorable report on Senate Bill 420.

**For more information call:**

Christine K. Krone

J. Steven Wise

Danna L. Kauffman

410-244-7000

**Maryland Catholic Conference\_FAV\_SB420.pdf**

Uploaded by: Diane Arias

Position: FAV



MARYLAND  
CATHOLIC  
CONFERENCE

**February 10, 2026**

**Senate Bill 420**  
**Public Institutions of Higher Education - Pregnant and Parenting Students - Plan**  
**and Reporting**  
**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 420** requires the Maryland Higher Education Commission to collect certain data regarding the parental status of students from each public institution of higher education in the State; requiring public institutions of higher education to collect and report certain demographic data from students; and requiring all public institutions of higher education to adopt a certain plan for pregnant and parenting students.

In Maryland, nearly 70,000 students, constituting one-fifth of undergraduates, are parents.<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

Collecting demographic data on parenting status is essential to understanding the scope of need and ensuring that institutions connect student parents with existing resources. This data may also inform future decisions about providing safe and appropriate childcare options so parenting students can attend classes while caring for their children. Importantly, data collection enables the State to allocate funding more effectively to support parenting students.

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<sup>1</sup> <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.>

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

Maryland took an important step last year by passing SB 420 requiring public senior higher education institutions to adopt a plan regarding pregnant and parenting students to include referral to on-campus or off-campus services. The data collected under Senate Bill 420 builds on that progress by ensuring these policies are adequately funded and implemented. Pregnancy and parenting support services play a critical role in helping students succeed academically while raising families. Parenting students pursue higher education to secure better-paying careers, and adequate campus support is essential to ensure they can complete their degrees without sacrificing their parental responsibilities. When eligible, access to government subsidies and support services can further stabilize families and promote long-term success.

This legislation affirms the value of life welcomed by parenting students and strengthens institutional support to help parents raise healthy families while achieving educational attainment.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **SB 420**.

Thank you for your consideration.

**SB 0420 Letter of Support - Jabette Lozupone 01 23**

Uploaded by: Ja'Bette Lozupone

Position: FAV

Ja'Bette Lozupone, D.O.L.  
21021 Goshen Road  
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20882  
[jabette@wishfuldoings.com](mailto:jabette@wishfuldoings.com)  
240-305-2426  
February 6, 2026

**Senator Brian Feldman**

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Maryland State Legislature  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Subject:** Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 0420 / House Bill 006 – Maryland Higher Education Commission – Demographic Data Collection – Parental Status

Dear Senator Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

As a proud former student parent, teen parent, and current higher education administrator leading student-parent initiatives at a public institution in Maryland, I am writing to express my strong and deeply personal support for Senate Bill 0420 / House Bill 006.

This bill builds directly on the progress made by House Bill 0840, the Pregnant and Parenting Student Support Act, by strengthening implementation and accountability across Maryland's public higher education system. While HB 0840 established requirements for public senior institutions to adopt plans supporting pregnant and parenting students, SB 0420 / HB 006 takes the next critical and logical step by expanding these requirements to *all* public institutions of higher education and by requiring the Maryland Higher Education Commission to collect consistent data on the parental status of enrolled students.

Put simply, we cannot effectively support student parents if we do not know who they are.

SB 0420 / HB 006 does **not** create new programs, new mandates, or new costs. Rather, it is a **cost-free expansion of existing law** that equips institutions to do what they already strive to do for student success: provide targeted, personalized support by efficiently connecting students to community-based and state-level resources for which they are already eligible. This bill ensures institutions can clearly identify parenting students and connect them to supports that already exist, improving retention, completion, and long-term economic outcomes for Maryland families.

Nationally, one in five undergraduate students and one in three graduate students are parenting while enrolled in college. In Maryland, student parents represent a significant but often invisible population. Without consistent and comprehensive data collection, institutions and policymakers are limited in their ability to reach these students, assess whether supports are effective, or ensure equitable access to essential resources such as childcare, healthcare, housing stability, and academic accommodations.

The 2023 Maryland Higher Education Commission Report on Advising Systems and Wrap-around Services confirmed this challenge, noting that few institutions currently collect comprehensive data on student parents. Without accurate information, it is impossible to fully understand their needs or measure outcomes tied to enrollment, retention, completion, transfer, and employment.

My support for this bill is also deeply personal.

After becoming pregnant at 16 following my first semester away at college, I lost my campus housing. My priorities quickly shifted to full-time work, childcare, and continuing my education at a local community college. If not for a handful of faculty and staff who recognized my potential and supported me despite the absence of formal systems, I would not have earned my bachelor's, master's, or doctorate degrees.

I will forever be grateful for a college business professor who noticed that I consistently returned late from break to her once-per-week evening class. When she asked why, I explained that I was nursing my infant daughter. Without hesitation, she encouraged me to bring my daughter to class, nurse her in the back of the room, and step out only if needed. That simple act of recognition and flexibility ensured my academic success and affirmed that I belonged.

Today, I write to you as Dr. Ja'Bette Lozupone, a former teen parent, higher education administrator, and business owner, because one caring individual made the difference in the absence of systemic support. SB 0420 / HB 006 ensures that student success is not dependent on chance encounters with compassionate faculty, but instead supported by intentional, data-informed systems across all public institutions in Maryland.

Parenting students deserve to be seen, counted, and connected to the resources that support their success. Their outcomes should be measured, their contributions documented, and their determination to build economic prosperity for their families and communities recognized and celebrated.

Passing SB 0420 / HB 006 will ensure Maryland is prepared to support its estimated 70,000 student parents and position the state as a national leader in student success, equity, and workforce development.

I respectfully urge the Committee to support SB 0420 / HB 006 and take this vital step toward a more inclusive, efficient, and effective higher education system.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

**Ja'Bette Lozupone, D.O.L., MBA**

**sb 420**

Uploaded by: Richard Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

SB0420\_RichardKaplowitz\_FAV  
02/10/2026  
Richard Keith Kaplowitz  
Frederick, MD 21703

**TESTIMONY ON SB#/0420 – FAVORABLE**

**Public Institutions of Higher Education - Pregnant and Parenting Students - Plan and Reporting**

**TO:** Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

**FROM:** Richard Keith Kaplowitz

**My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#0420, Public Institutions of Higher Education - Pregnant and Parenting Students - Plan and Reporting**

This bill will require the Maryland Higher Education Commission to collect certain data regarding the parental status of students from each public institution of higher education in the State; requiring public institutions of higher education to collect and report certain demographic data from students; and requiring all public institutions of higher education to adopt a certain plan for pregnant and parenting students.

The Institute for Women’s Policy Research has studied this and developed excellent reasons to collect this information in support of government objectives.

While promoting student-parent success has mainly been left to institutions of higher education, several states have considered or adopted a range of policy initiatives to support student parents in postsecondary education. This paper provides state policy stakeholders, including governors, state agencies, and advocates, with a snapshot of the multitude of issues faced by student parents and with options to utilize state policy to address these issues. <sup>1</sup>

This legislation adds a commonsense methodology to accumulate data to guide government policy and funding by the schools, the jurisdiction they are in, and the state. The NPR report “*What the 'One Big Beautiful Bill' will change for students, schools and colleges*” <sup>2</sup> clearly explains all the effects of Federal cutbacks that will affect this population. Collection of demographic information can help the state budget to assist educational institutions to provide the necessary support to mitigate this Federal abandonment of our parent and pregnant students.

**I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report and pass SB0420.**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Student-Parent-State-Policy-Brief-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.npr.org/2025/07/18/nx-s1-5459784/trump-school-college-student>

**SVA\_MDSB420\_STR\_02.10.26.pdf**

Uploaded by: Tammy Barlet

Position: FAV



**STATEMENT OF  
STUDENT VETERANS OF AMERICA**

**BEFORE THE**

**COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, ENERGY, and the ENVIRONMENT  
MARYLAND SENATE**

**HEARING ON SB 420,**

***“Public Institutions of Higher Education –  
Pregnant and Parenting Students - Plan and Reporting”***

**February 10, 2026**

Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit a statement for the record on MD SB420, *Public Institutions of Higher Education - Pregnant and Parenting Students - Plan and Reporting*. Student Veterans of America (SVA) writes in strong support of SB 420, which strengthens Maryland's ability to identify, support, and retain pregnant and parenting students through improved data collection and institutional planning.

With a mission focused on empowering student veterans, SVA is committed to providing an educational experience that goes beyond the classroom. Through a dedicated and expansive network of more than 1,600 chapters across the country, SVA aims to inspire yesterday's warriors by connecting student veterans with a community of like-minded chapter leaders.<sup>1</sup> Every day these passionate leaders work to provide the necessary resources, network support, and advocacy to ensure student veterans, military-connected students, their families, caregivers, and survivors can effectively connect, expand their skills, and ultimately achieve their greatest potential.

Maryland is home to more than 360,098 veterans, with an estimated 20,773 students currently using the GI Bill and roughly 4,000 new GI Bill users entering Maryland institutions each year. Student veterans bring approximately \$677 million into Maryland's local economies annually, including education benefits and disability compensation.<sup>2</sup> These investments only reach their full return when students are supported to persist and complete. Parenting students, many of whom are student veterans, are central to that equation.

Nationally, roughly one in five undergraduates and one in four graduate students are raising children.<sup>3</sup> Among student veterans, more than half are parents and about 20 percent are single parents. The vast majority (about 93 percent) are over age 25, and nearly 75 percent work while enrolled.<sup>1</sup> That number increases for women. These lived realities shape how students experience campus systems. When institutions are designed around a traditional student model, parenting student veterans face invisible barriers that delay completion and stifle workforce entry.

SVA's Summer 2025 focus groups with Maryland student veterans surfaced a consistent theme: students are often invisible to institutions until they are already in crisis. One participant shared, "We ask on the application, but I have met quite a few veterans who I didn't have on my list... they just found me... usually right before graduation."<sup>4</sup> This lack of consistent identification of veterans mirrors what pregnant and parenting students experience when institutions do not systematically collect or use data to guide support. SB 420 directly addresses this gap by requiring institutions to pair data collection with intentional support plans rather than relying on students to self-advocate at the point of need.

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<sup>1</sup> Student Veterans of America. *Annual Census of Student Veterans*. Latest edition.

<sup>2</sup> Student Veterans of America. *Strengthening Maryland Policies for Student Veteran Success: Focus Groups, Summer 2025*.

<sup>3</sup> Anderson, Theresa, et al. (2024). *Who Are Undergraduates with Dependent Children?* Student-Parent Action through Research Knowledge (SPARK) Collaborative.

<sup>4</sup> Student Veterans of America. *Maryland Student Veteran Focus Groups, Summer 2025: Qualitative Findings*.

Parenting responsibilities compound other basic needs challenges. In SVA's Maryland focus groups, student veterans described leaving exams or missing required coursework due to lack of childcare, transportation, or emergency funds. One student shared that they had to walk away from a monitored testing environment because they had no childcare available and could not afford a babysitter.<sup>4</sup> In Maryland, about half of student veterans asked reported they had less than \$500 in a savings account and about half of those students had nothing.<sup>4</sup> These experiences reflect structural friction points that disproportionately affect pregnant and parenting students and quietly erode persistence. Institutional plans required under SB 420 create the conditions for campuses to anticipate these challenges and coordinate supports before they derail enrollment.

SVA's research shows that student veterans persist and perform well academically even when not accounting for institutional supports,<sup>5</sup> with classroom outcomes exceeding national averages.<sup>1</sup> It then becomes incumbent upon those within educational and institutional structures to consider the potential of these students to succeed when their realities are fully understood and incorporated into institutional design. Data provides the foundation for this shift. It allows campuses to move from reactive accommodation toward intentional, anticipatory support. When institutions know which of their students are parents, they can ensure reliable access to advising, benefits navigation, lactation spaces, flexible scheduling, childcare referrals, and emergency financial assistance. SB 420 moves Maryland toward that model.

Maryland's workforce goals are directly tied to this policy. Veterans who complete postsecondary credentials experience strong labor market outcomes and increased lifetime earnings.<sup>6</sup> Yet delays in completion translate into postponed financial security and slower wealth accumulation. SVA's Maryland focus groups found that many students take stopgap jobs unrelated to their field simply to meet immediate income needs while enrolled.<sup>4</sup> For parenting students, the pressure to prioritize short-term income over long-term career alignment is even greater. Supporting persistence through institutional planning is not only a student success strategy. It is a workforce development strategy.

Federal higher education data systems face uncertainty, making state-level data capacity increasingly important.<sup>7</sup> SVA's work building state-based veteran education data systems demonstrates that timely, disaggregated data enables earlier intervention and more precise policy design. SB 420 positions Maryland to lead by ensuring that pregnant and parenting students are visible within institutional systems and that supports are aligned with real student pathways.

At the campus level, SVA chapters regularly identify barriers related to childcare access, mental health, housing insecurity, and benefits navigation long before those challenges appear in statewide datasets, if they do at all. At the state level, SVA aggregates these lived experiences into research and policy recommendations that align education systems with workforce outcomes. SB 420 reflects this integrated approach. It recognizes that student

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<sup>5</sup> Cate, C. A., Lyon, J. S., Schmeling, J., & Bogue, B. Y. (2017). *National Veteran Education Success Tracker: A report on the academic success of student veterans using the Post-9/11 GI Bill*. Student Veterans of America.

<sup>6</sup> Student Veterans of America Research & RAND Corporation. *Veteran Education and Workforce Outcomes*.

<sup>7</sup> Blake, Jessica. "Under McMahon, ED Is Diminished but Not Dead, Experts Say." *Inside Higher Ed*, 2025.

success is cumulative. Persistence depends on early identification. Economic mobility is shaped while students are still enrolled. Progress is sustained only when basic stability is preserved through the transition into the workforce. When these elements align, opportunity compounds.

SVA urges the Committee to advance SB 420. The bill reflects a forward-looking approach to higher education accountability that recognizes today's students as workers, parents, caregivers, and future contributors to Maryland's economy. With better data and intentional institutional planning, Maryland can ensure that pregnant and parenting students, including the many student veterans raising families, are positioned not just to enroll, but to complete and thrive. The continued success of veterans in higher education in the Post-9/11 era is no coincidence. Throughout our nation's history, educated veterans have helped solve complex challenges and drive economic growth, and today's student veterans carry that legacy forward by strengthening Maryland's workforce and communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony. SVA stands ready to support Maryland in implementing evidence-based strategies that strengthen student success and workforce outcomes.

# **Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 0420 – Theresa**

Uploaded by: Theresa Anderson

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 0420 – PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER  
EDUCATION – PREGNANT AND PARENTING STUDENTS – PLAN AND REPORTING**

**Statement of  
Theresa Anderson, PhD\*  
Senior Fellow, Urban Institute**

**before the  
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee of the Maryland State Legislature**

**SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT  
COMMITTEE – BILL HEARING**

**February 10, 2026**

\*The views expressed are my own and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders.

I thank Maia Berlow, Sarah Trumble, and Sarah LaCorte for their help in preparing this testimony.

Dear Senator Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

My name is Theresa Anderson, and I am a senior fellow at the Urban Institute, a nonprofit, nonpartisan social policy and research organization based in Washington, DC. **I am writing to express my support for S.B. 0420: Public Institutions of Higher Education – Pregnant and Parenting Students – Plan and Reporting**, which would require Maryland’s public institutions of higher education to collect and report data on pregnant and parenting students. The views expressed are my own and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders.

**Supporting parenting students is a very effective two-generation strategy, but we cannot adequately support them if we do not know who they are.** My research shows that when mothers return to school and complete postsecondary credentials, it yields long-term benefits for themselves and their children.<sup>1</sup> Among mothers born between 1957 and 1964, I found that those who reenrolled in school and completed two- or four-year college degrees earned, on average, over \$9,200 more annually. Their children were 38 percent more likely to finish college and earned over \$5,500 more annually before age 30. These effects were much larger than when mothers simply reenrolled in college, underscoring the importance of opening doors and supporting college completion to promote intergenerational mobility.

**In other related research, we found that supporting parents to enter and complete college paid off for state taxpayers and the broader economy.** In a review of three models of how to support student parents at public colleges in Virginia, all three netted a positive return to taxpayers in increased tax revenue and decreased benefit costs. This did not include the personal and multigenerational benefits to students and their families, which would result in larger returns. Student-parent programs had the highest return on investment at \$5.36 per \$1.00 spent, while on-campus child care resulted in the largest number of additional graduates.<sup>2</sup> In short, investments in student parents are not only socially beneficial but also fiscally prudent.

**Parents are an important segment of the college recruitment population and represent an opportunity to upskill the Maryland workforce.** An estimated half a million parents in Maryland do not have a college degree, and more than one-third have some college experience but no credential.<sup>3</sup>

**National data indicate that parents are a significant share of postsecondary students, accounting for about 1 in 5 undergraduate students and 1 in 4 graduate students. But without insight into each college’s parenting population, individual institutions have been unable or unwilling to provide sufficient supports.** In a 2022 review, we identified a lack of data on student parents’ characteristics, outcomes, and opportunities as a primary barrier to colleges and related systems supporting parents’ college success.<sup>4</sup> For example, because they do not know how many students have children or how old those children are,

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<sup>1</sup> Theresa Anderson, “[What If Mom Went Back to School?](#),” (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2022). Dollar values have been updated for inflation from the original research report to 2025 dollars.

<sup>2</sup> Garrett Hicks and Theresa Anderson, “[The Taxpayer Benefits of Supporting Student Parents: An Analysis of Three Policy Options for Virginia’s Public Colleges](#),” (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2024).

<sup>3</sup> Theresa Anderson, “[Supporting Student Parents Pays Off](#),” (Washington, DC: Student-Parent Action through Research Knowledge Collaborative, 2025).

<sup>4</sup> Theresa Anderson and Autumn R. Green, [Roadmap for Change to Support Pregnant and Parenting Students: Putting Student-Parent Families at the Center of Recommendations for Practice, Policy, Research, and Investment \(Version 1.0\)](#), (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2022).

colleges tend to underprovide resources such as child care, benefit navigation, and financial aid officers who specialize in packages for students with dependent children. Colleges also miss opportunities to adjust campus life to benefit parents, such as scheduling courses at times that align with the schedules of students with children in public schools and offering family-friendly student life events. With a comprehensive understanding of their parenting student populations, colleges could also strengthen partnerships or forge new ones with public schools, public human service agencies, and local community-based organizations to support parents' academic engagement and success.

We have seen colleges use data to make internal changes and develop partnerships that promote student success in our work on the [Data-to-Action Campaign for Parenting Students](#). In this effort, we partnered with 23 colleges, universities, and college systems in four states that have student-parent data collection mandates as they implement new data collection and support efforts for parenting students. **Our work with colleges, systems, and states also showed that data collection was not overly costly or burdensome and that data improvements made to track parenting students, as well as responsive supports, could also be applied to other priority student populations.**

This bill would propel Maryland to the forefront of the movement to support college pathways for parents. Five states—[California](#), [Illinois](#), [Minnesota](#), [Oregon](#), and [Texas](#)—have passed legislation relating to counting and/or serving postsecondary parenting students in unique ways. **Requiring data collection in Maryland through legislation is necessary because no other data sources reliably identify parenting students at the college level.** The 2023 redesign of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) made it less useful for identifying students with dependent children, and many students did not complete the FAFSA before this change.<sup>5</sup> Title IX of the Higher Education Act, which provides some protections for pregnant and postpartum students, does not have data collection or reporting mandates.<sup>6</sup> The Maryland Higher Education Commission found in a 2023 report that colleges statewide are not voluntarily collecting data needed to identify the student-parent population.<sup>7</sup> They noted, “[W]hen asked to provide counts of student parents on their campuses, the vast majority of institutions reported they have no information on the parental status of their students. Several institutions provided estimates of parent student counts by using data from the registrar or financial aid offices, noting that this may undercount these data.” Current estimates of students with dependent children come from national surveys from the US Department of Education and the US Census Bureau, but they cannot be disaggregated at the institutional level and take a narrow definition of “parent” that excludes many students serving in a parenting role for a child who is not a legal dependent.

Supporting parenting students not only supports families actively pursuing intergenerational mobility but also makes good economic sense for states. Passing a bill requiring colleges to identify their student parents would be a strong and necessary step toward improving education and economic outcomes for current and future generations of Marylanders.

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<sup>5</sup> Theresa Anderson, “[Colleges Will Need New Data Collection Efforts to Identify Parenting Students after Changes to Financial Aid Forms](#),” (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2024).

<sup>6</sup> US Department of Education, “[Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance](#),” (Washington, DC: Federal Register, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> Wes Moore, Aruna Miller, and Sanjay Rai, [Report on Advising Systems and Wrap-around Services](#), (Baltimore, MD: MHEC, 2023).

# Jess Myers SB 0420 - Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Yoslin Amaya

Position: FAV

Jess Myers  
722 S Luzerne Ave  
Baltimore, MD 21224  
[jessicastmyers@gmail.com](mailto:jessicastmyers@gmail.com)  
410-935-3961

February 6, 2026

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

**Subject:** Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 0420/House Bill 006 – Maryland Higher Education Commission – Demographic Data Collection – Parental Status

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

As a current professional working at an institution of higher education, a former Sr. Higher Ed Impact Manager at Generation Hope (a non-profit dedicated to supporting parenting students in college), the former director of the Women's Center at University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC), and as someone who is from Baltimore, Maryland, I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 0420/House Bill 006. This bill builds on the progress made by House Bill 0840, the Pregnant and Parenting Student Support Act, by strengthening implementation and accountability across Maryland's public higher education system.

Nationwide, 1 in 5 undergraduate students and 1 in 3 graduate students are parenting while in college. This number is even higher in community colleges which is why it's so critical that this bill includes them. Better data collection is an essential first step to improving college completion rates for student parents. Without comprehensive data collection on this vital student population, policymakers and institutional leaders struggle to truly understand student parents' experiences and dismantle the barriers impeding their academic and professional success.

Supporting student parents is a matter of racial and social justice. And, in the current political reality of our country, supporting parenting students is a way to move the needle forward in supporting racial justice even if we can't say race or racism. Student parents are

more likely to be students of color and live at or below the poverty line than their non-parenting peers. The unique challenges faced by student parents are not only due to their parental status, but also due to the many intersecting identities that impact their journeys to and through higher education. Supporting student parent success will help the state of Maryland reach its goals in regards to retention and graduation rates for Pell-eligible students and students of color. A report released by Maryland Higher Education Commission in September 2023 indicates that not many colleges are collecting this data and those that are, do not have a comprehensive picture. The commission recommends that better data collection is needed to understand the full needs of this unique, and overlooked, population.

I share this background as greater context to my own professional story. As mentioned, I served as the director of the Women's Center at UMBC for eleven years between 2011 and 2022. Among my diverse portfolio and responsibilities, an important part of my work was supporting parenting members of UMBC community members to include students, staff, and faculty. I share this background as greater context to my own professional story. During my very busy days, I would often give up my office space for a busy student parent needing to pump when the Center's lactation room was occupied. The Center tracked the number of community members using the lactation room and it was only because we had the data that I could advocate for additional lactation rooms to be added to campus renovation projects such as incorporating a lactation room into the updated recreation center. Without these numbers, no one else on campus would know how many students, faculty, and staff needed these essential spaces and services. Yet, this data was kept only in the Women's Center, reported out in our yearly annual report, or shared as needed. It was not systematically collected nor was it systematically collected. How many other nursing students are not being counted. How many other pregnant, nursing, and parenting students are not getting their needs met because they are otherwise invisible on campus?

Additionally, I oversaw a scholarship program for adult learners. Of the approximately 25 students the Center served each year, at least half of these students were parenting students. As part of the application process, the Center was able to collect data on these students to include how many children they had and their children's ages. Through my semesterly check-ins with them, through the events they attended, and how they used the Center space, I learned deeply about the way being a parent shaped and impacted their experience as a UMBC student. The Women's Center adjusted our services and supports to accommodate them and when possible, I would use these experiences to inform other faculty and staff to encourage similar kinds of accommodations and supports.

The Foundation that provided the scholarship funds would ask us to compare the scholarship recipients to other similar non-scholarship recipient students at UMBC. Most often, scholarship recipients had better GPAs and were retained at higher rates from

semester to semester than those who were not receiving scholarships. We used age as a comparison, but were unable to compare by parenting status because UMBC did not collect that data. Considering some of the other statistics on parenting students that include the fact that they often have better GPAs than their non-parenting peers yet are more likely to drop out and not complete college, I do not doubt that the parenting students who were not connected to the Women's Center via our scholarship most likely were struggling academically and personally. Yet, there was no way the Women's Center, nor UMBC, could reach out to them, assess their needs, and create additional resources and support to meet their unique needs as parents.

This is a failure of our institutions and we must do better. I would like to think that schools like UMBC would be motivated to collect this data, but I also acknowledge that staff in positions to make this happen are charged with competing priorities and often are operating with limited staff. I witnessed this in my former role as a Sr. Higher Ed Impact Manager at Generation Hope. There, I worked with institutions who committed to a 2-year program called FamilyU to enable their schools to better support student parents and still moving the needle on student parent data collection is always challenging. I coached a community college in Texas and it wasn't until passage of legislation that created new protections for pregnant and parenting students in Texas, specifically Texas Ed. Code. § 51.9 (SB597/HB13610,) that enabled the team to make progress in creating systemic student parent data collection. They have since been able to begin systematically collecting data about their student parents. In turn, they have been able to identify these students to follow up with additional support and resources. This would have not been possible without the passage of this legislation.

This proposed legislation will allow State and institutional policymakers and leaders to access data that more accurately captures the number of parenting students in Maryland than ever before. Based on national data, it can be assumed that more than 70,000 Marylanders are parenting while attending college part- or full-time. This information will increase awareness of student parents and the unique barriers that they face and empower policymakers at every level to make informed decisions and provide targeted support for this often-overlooked population. Student parents deserve to be recognized and supported so that they can succeed in higher education and beyond.

I urge the Appropriations Committee to support Senate Bill 0420/House Bill 006 so that Maryland can continue to be an inclusive leader in higher education. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Jess Myers

# **Yoslin Amaya - SB420 - Favorable.pdf**

Uploaded by: Yoslin Amaya

Position: FAV

**Yoslin Amaya Hernandez**

13315 Ardennes Ave  
Rockville, MD 20851  
February 6, 2025

**Senator Brian Feldman**

Chair, Education, Energy and Environment Committee  
Maryland State Legislature  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Subject: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 0420/House Bill 006 – Public Institutions of Higher Education - Pregnant and Parenting Students - Plan and Reporting**

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

My name is Yoslin Amaya Hernandez, and I am a graduate student parent, a Montgomery County resident, and a policy and advocacy professional working closely with student parents across Maryland. I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 0420/House Bill 006.

SB 0420/HB 006 builds on the Pregnant and Parenting Student Support Act by strengthening implementation and accountability across Maryland's public higher education system. While existing law requires institutions to develop plans to support pregnant and parenting students, SB 0420/HB 006 takes the critical next step by expanding those requirements to all public institutions and by requiring consistent data collection on students' parental status. Simply put, we cannot effectively support student parents if we do not know who they are.

Nationally, one in five undergraduate students and one in three graduate students are parenting while enrolled in college. In Maryland, student parents represent a significant but often invisible population. Without reliable, uniform data, institutions are limited in their ability to connect students to existing supports, evaluate whether those supports are working, or plan effectively for services such as child care, housing stability, academic flexibility, and health care access.

As both a student parent and someone who has worked closely with colleges, advocates, and policymakers, I have seen how the absence of data creates gaps in support. When student parents are not identified, they are often excluded from planning conversations, overlooked in resource allocation, and left to navigate higher education systems on their own. This invisibility disproportionately affects students of color and students with low incomes, making data collection an issue of equity as well as efficiency.

SB 0420/HB 006 provides Maryland with the tools needed to better understand and serve an estimated 70,000 student parents across the state. By requiring the Maryland Higher Education Commission to collect consistent demographic data, this bill will allow institutions and

policymakers to move from assumptions to informed action and ensure that existing legal requirements translate into meaningful, on-the-ground support.

I respectfully urge the Education, Energy and Environment Committee to support Senate Bill 0420/House Bill 006 and continue Maryland's leadership in advancing equity and student success in higher education.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Yoslin Amaya Hernandez

# Written Testimony SB0420 MD 2026.pdf

Uploaded by: Danielle Christenson

Position: FWA



February 5, 2026

Marjorie Sims  
Ascend at the Aspen Institute  
2300 N St NW  
Washington, DC 20037  
Marjorie.Sims@aspeninstitute.org

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

Subject: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 0420/House Bill 006 – Maryland Higher Education Commission – Demographic Data Collection – Parental Status

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

[Ascend at the Aspen Institute](#) appreciates the opportunity to submit written testimony in strong support of SB 0420/HB 006. This bill builds on the progress made by House Bill 0840, the Pregnant and Parenting Student Support Act, by strengthening implementation and accountability across Maryland's public higher education system.

We recommend passage of SB 0420 with amendments striking subsections (C)(2)(ii) and (iv) to protect pregnant students' autonomy and mitigate the risk of institutional discrimination.

### Support for Student Parent Data Collection

As a national leader in [two-generation \(2Gen\) approaches](#), Ascend recognizes that student parents represent a significant portion of our postsecondary population—nationally, 20% of undergraduates and 28% of graduate students are parenting. However, without standardized data collection, these students remain largely "invisible" to the very institutions designed to help them succeed.

While HB 0840 laid the groundwork for supporting this demographic, SB 0420/HB 006 takes the essential next step by expanding these requirements to all public higher education institutions and requiring the Maryland Higher Education Commission collect consistent data on students' parental status. Simply put, we cannot effectively support student parents if we do not know who they are. SB 0420/HB 006 provides the necessary framework to identify pregnant and parenting students and connect them to the supports already mandated under Maryland law.

In Maryland, an estimated 70,000 student parents are currently navigating higher education. SB 0420/HB 006 provides the framework to ensure these students not only enroll but also thrive



and complete their degrees. By addressing these unique academic and systemic challenges, Maryland can position itself as a national leader in educational equity and student success.

The need for accurate data collection is underscored by the experience of one of our Parent Advisors, Michaela Martin. As a single mother, Michaela needed child care in order to attend community college. However, her campus had a 2-3 year waitlist for child care services, despite her program lasting only two years. When she brought this issue to the college administration's attention, she was told the college would need data about how many students had children in need of care before any changes could be made. Recognizing the systemic barriers student parents face, Michaela successfully advocated for [Oregon Senate Bill 564](#), passed in 2021, which requires public postsecondary institutions in Oregon to collect and report data on the number of students with children. Her story highlights the urgent need for SB 0420/HB 006, as data collection is a foundational step toward implementing policies that truly support student parents.

### Recommendations on Amending Institutional Support Plans

While we fully support efforts on college campuses aimed at increasing student parent supports through referrals, we are concerned with specific language in the legislation that requires postsecondary institutions make referrals to adoption services and off-campus health providers. Mandating such referrals raises concerns that students could experience pressure—whether explicit or implicit—or that institutions could inadvertently interfere with pregnant students' legally protected right to an education free from harassment and discrimination.

Ascend respectfully urges the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to support and pass SB 0420/ HB 006, with amendments to strike subsections (c)(2)(ii) and (iv) to protect pregnant students' autonomy and prevent colleges from increasing their risk of discriminating against pregnant students.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "MS", written in a cursive style.

Marjorie Sims  
Managing Director  
Ascend at the Aspen Institute

**Letter in support of SB0420.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jessica Lee

Position: FWA



February 6, 2026

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

**Subject: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 0420 – Public Institutions of Higher Education, With Amendments - Pregnant and Parenting Students - Plan and Reporting**

Dear Senator Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

As Director of the Pregnant Scholar Initiative,<sup>i</sup> the nation's legal resource center on the rights of pregnant and parenting students, I am writing to express my support for SB0420 and offer information on how the bill may be amended to better serve students and avoid discrimination.

*Support for data collection*

My organization provides technical assistance to higher education institutions nationwide, equipping administrators with the tools they need to recruit, retain, and graduate pregnant and parenting students. In my more than a decade of experience, a persistent problem exists; institutions cannot serve students if they do not know who they are. Moreover, not tracking student parents and their needs causes institutions to operate inefficiently—employing strategies that don't work, wasting precious state resources in the process.

While there are tens of thousands of student parents in Maryland,<sup>ii</sup> we are uncertain of exactly how many, where they are located, what their needs are, and whether they graduate. SB0420 would address this issue by requiring institutions to include parental status in demographic collection. It would also require institutions to track key details such as the age of the student's child(ren); these details are essential to assist institutions of higher education in their efforts to retain students and meet their needs. For example, understanding the ages of students' children enables institutions, state/local agencies, and community organizations to better assess childcare needs and tailor any services provided to the actual demand. By counting parenting students, we can more effectively allocate resources to support them—and evaluate whether the resources are having the desired effect.

Currently, the National Center for Education Statistics within the U.S. Department of Education collects some data on the student parent population. This data was already insufficient to meet the needs of states and educational institutions; now, with the dismantling of the Department of Education, we anticipate new problems with data availability and reliability.<sup>iii</sup> As such, it is critical for states to step in to collect this essential data so that they have the high-quality information they need to secure their economic future.



Supporting pregnant and parenting students—first, by counting them—is a small but worthwhile investment in student success. Student parents make up 1 in 5 undergraduate students and 1 in 4 graduates.<sup>iv</sup> While these students’ academic achievement is on par (if not higher) than that of their childless peers, they are also far less likely to graduate on time.<sup>v</sup> Yet when they do have the support they need to achieve their educational goals it brings far-reaching benefits; parents earn more income, and their children are more likely to reach their own educational goals.<sup>vi</sup>

*Amendments are needed to section on institutional plans*

Expanding the requirement to establish support plans for pregnant and parenting students would help more of these students access resources critical to meeting their educational goals. However, as currently written, SB0420 risks causing harm to vulnerable students and potential liability for institutions by requiring additional institutions of higher education to refer students to off-campus adoption and healthcare services (subsections (c)(2)(ii) and (iv)). These problematic provisions should be struck.

Providing referrals to off-campus healthcare and adoption providers creates liability concerns that institutions are ill-equipped to manage. Critical questions remain unanswered: How will these providers be properly vetted? Can campuses ensure providers don’t pressure young people toward or away from particular reproductive choices? How will campus staff be trained to provide referrals without bias? The risk is all too real; our helpline already receives calls from students who have been pressured to have an abortion or to continue their pregnancy against their wishes, and other institutions have recently been accused of coercing students to put their children up for adoption.<sup>vii</sup>

I respectfully urge the Committee to support SB0420, with amendments to strike subsections (c)(2)(ii) and (c)(2)(iv). Passing SB0420 will ensure Maryland has the tools to support its thousands of student parents, empowering them to thrive in higher education and beyond.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jessica Lee, J.D.

Co-Founder and Director, Pregnant Scholar  
Co-Director, WorkLife Law



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<sup>i</sup> WorkLife Law’s [Pregnant Scholar Initiative](#) is the nation’s legal resource center on the rights of pregnant and parenting students in postsecondary education and is based at the University of California College of the Law, San Francisco. The Pregnant Scholar works with postsecondary institutions to help them understand their legal obligations to accommodate and not discriminate against pregnant and parenting students, as required by Title IX and various state laws. We also provide direct services to student parents and pregnant students who have questions about their legal rights.

<sup>ii</sup> See, e.g., Baker, Stephanie, “How Many College Students are Parents in Your State?,” New America, 2026, <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/how-many-college-students-are-parents-in-your-state/>

<sup>iii</sup> Kathryn Palmer, Guttled NCES Releases First Batch of Higher Ed Data, Inside Higher Ed (September 25, 2025), available at: <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/faculty-issues/research/2025/09/25/guttled-nces-releases-first-batch-higher-ed-data>.

<sup>iv</sup> Theresa Anderson, et al. *Who Are Undergraduates with Dependent Children? An Updated Overview of Student-Parent Characteristics Using 2020 Data*. Student-Parent Action through Research Knowledge (SPARK) Collaborative, (2024) available at: <https://studentparentaction.org/resources/who-are-undergraduates-with-dependent-children-2020>.

<sup>v</sup> See, e.g., New Data Insights on Student Parents from a Multi-Organization Collaborative Effort, Institute for Women’s Policy Research, <https://iwpr.org/new-data-insights-on-student-parents-from-a-multi-organization-collaborative-effort/#:~:text=Student%20parents%20are%20highly%20motivated,peers'%20average%20GPA%20of%203.15>.

<sup>vi</sup> Theresa Anderson, “*What If Mom Went Back to School?*” Urban Institute, (2022) available at: <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/what-if-mom-went-back-school>.

<sup>vii</sup> Whitney Evans, ‘Liberty Lost’ podcast alleges program coerced pregnant teens into adoption, Virginia Public Media News (August 12, 2025) available at: <https://www.vpm.org/news/2025-08-12/liberty-lost-tj-raphael-maternity-home-family-life-services-adoption>.

# **Senate Testimony\_2026\_MD\_SB0420\_New America Higher**

Uploaded by: Stephanie Baker

Position: FWA



February 6, 2026

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

**Subject:** Testimony In Support of Senate Bill 0420/House Bill 0006-Public Institutions of Higher Education, With Amendments - Pregnant and Parenting Students - Plan and Reporting

Dear Senator Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony related to Senate Bill 0420/House Bill 0006. New America is a policy think tank based in Washington, D.C., and our higher education program is a team of researchers and advocates who are dedicated to making higher education more equitable and accountable so that every student has the chance to obtain an affordable, high-quality education after high school. Within our Student Parent Initiative, we conduct research and provide federal, state, and institutional policy recommendations grounded in evidence to promote the success of student parents. For this reason, we are uniquely positioned to provide testimony that supports data transparency, while also calling for ways to improve the bill to protect pregnant students' privacy and autonomy.

We encourage the committee to support and pass SB0420 with amendments to strike subsections (C)(2)(ii) and (iv) to protect pregnant students' autonomy and prevent colleges from increasing risks of discriminating against pregnant students.

### **Support for Student Parent Data Collection**

Student parents are a significant presence on campuses, making up about 1 in 5 undergraduates and 1 in 4 graduate students.<sup>1</sup> The majority of parenting students are female, people of color, and on average older than the traditional college student.<sup>2</sup> In Maryland, this is an estimated 44,000 undergraduate degree-seeking students and 32,000 graduate students,<sup>3</sup> but we do not know at which institutions or programs parenting students are enrolled and lack institution or state-level data on their persistence and graduation. This significantly limits colleges and state lawmakers in supporting retention and graduation for parenting students, who represent significant college attainment and workforce potential in the state.

A lack of actionable data on parenting students to inform policy for these students jeopardizes state and federal investments in higher education and the workforce. It also puts students at risk of investing money, time, and energy into a postsecondary program that doesn't pay off, or worse, leaves them with student

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<sup>1</sup> Anderson, Theresa, et al. 2024. *Who Are Undergraduates with Dependent Children? An Updated Overview of Student-Parent Characteristics Using 2020 Data*. n.p.: Student-Parent Action through Research Knowledge (SPARK) Collaborative.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> From analysis of American Community Survey (ACS) 2023 data, which is likely an undercount of student parents. For more, see Baker, Stephanie, "How Many College Students are Parents in Your State?," New America, 2026, <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/how-many-college-students-are-parents-in-your-state/>



loan debt and depleted financial resources but without improved job prospects and financial security. In order to better support parenting students and protect state and federal investments in higher education, we need better data which is why bills like SB0420 are vital.

Existing research on the parenting student population relies heavily on the National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey (NPSAS), a survey that provides data insights to higher education researchers and policymakers but is limited in its utility for state-level analyses. This data collection effort is housed within the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) within the U.S. Department of Education, which has experienced a federal reduction in force over the past year and tumultuous moving of programs to other federal agencies. Serious questions have been raised regarding how NCES will continue to collect higher education data and make it available to researchers and policymakers.<sup>4</sup> It is more important than ever that states consider how to collect robust data so that they are able to identify trends in higher education and are equipped with accurate information to make decisions that support state goals.

Ultimately, the significant responsibilities that parenting students carry creates unique challenges that can cause them to stop out of college or delay their progress working toward a credential. Better data collection can help Maryland higher education leaders and lawmakers identify barriers that parenting student parents face and plan strategically to improve postsecondary attainment for this population.

### **Suggested Amendments on Institutional Support Plans**

While colleges can play an important role in connecting student parents to resources that support them in meeting essential needs, some provisions in the legislation risk harming students and placing colleges at risk of violating pregnant students' rights under Federal Title IX and state laws.

We recommend striking subsection (c) (2)(ii) and (iv) that would require institutions to make referrals to adoption services and off campus health providers. Requiring colleges to refer students to adoption and health resources raises concerns about whether students could experience pressure or whether institutions could, even inadvertently, interfere with pregnant students' legally-protected right to an education free from harassment and discrimination. In addition, colleges are not well positioned to evaluate or oversee the quality of external health care providers, and referral requirements could create uncertainty or potential liability if institutions direct students to providers that do not meet appropriate standards or engage in practices inconsistent with students' needs or choices.

We encourage the committee to support and pass SB0420, with amendments to strike subsections (c) (2)(ii) and (iv) to protect pregnant students' autonomy and prevent colleges from increasing their risk of discriminating against pregnant students. Our team is also available for follow up questions and happy to provide additional research or resources on student parents in higher education. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Baker, MA, Senior Policy Manager, New America, Higher Education Policy Team

Ewaoluwa Obatuase, MPP, Policy Analyst, New America, Higher Education Policy Team

Richard Davis, Jr., MPA, Policy Analyst, New America, Higher Education Policy Team

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<sup>4</sup> Blake, Jessica, "Under McMahon, ED Is Diminished but Not Dead, Experts Say," Inside HigherEd, 2025, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/government/politics-elections/2025/11/03/under-mcmahon-ed-diminished-not-dead-experts-say>

**UNFAVORABLE.SB420.HB6.LauraBogley.MDRTL.pdf**

Uploaded by: Laura Bogley

Position: UNF



## **OPPOSITION STATEMENT SB420/HB6**

### **Public Institutions of Higher Education – Pregnant and Parenting Students – Plan & Reporting**

Laura Bogley, JD

Executive Director, Maryland Right to Life

### **We Strongly Oppose Abortion Promotion and Funding in Public Institutions of Higher Education**

Under the letter of the law, **Section 15-140** (the original *Pregnant and Parenting Student Support Act*) is framed as "life-affirming" policy, but its implementation is inextricably linked to **Section 15-136** (*Reproductive Health Services Plans*), which mandates abortion access and referrals. Whether a student is referred to an abortion provider under Section 15-140 depends on which office they visit and how the university has integrated its legal mandates. This leaves pregnant students vulnerable to abortion coercion on campus, in contradiction to the original intent of Title IX of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Maryland Right to Life (MDRTL) supports any public policy that enables and empowers young women and men to choose life for their preborn children. We applaud any effort to create an educational environment that supports students in their decisions to provide life to and/or to parent their children. However, we must oppose this bill and any mandate on public schools, community colleges and universities that requires referral to, promotion or funding of abortion and abortion providers as all Maryland programs require for "comprehensive" reproductive care.

Previous iterations of this bill expanded abortion access on certain University campuses within the University of Maryland system while rejecting equal access to lifesaving alternatives to abortion for students as required by federal Title IX's neutrality standard. This bill expands upon those non-compliant programs with their entrenched abortion bias, by applying the program under Education Article Section 15-140 to ALL public institutions of Higher Education in Maryland, which would include community colleges and increase taxpayer spending by at least \$51,900 in 2027.

### **Federal Title IX Requires Abortion Accommodation**

MDRTL has been consistent in our position that we cannot support any bill that would expand abortion access and coordination by codifying federal Title IX. Regulations attached to Title IX since 1975, corrupted the intent of the federal Higher Education Act of 1965 by requiring that any institution that receives federal funds, must provide equal accommodation for pregnancy **AND termination of pregnancy** by abortion. These federal regulations were imposed as a result of the Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade* (1973) which since has been overruled. Because this bill seeks to codify Title IX in Maryland statute and administrative policy, the bill cannot be cured by any amendment.

While federal Title IX requires any institution that receives federal funds to provide equal accommodation for

pregnancy or termination of pregnancy, including things like larger desks and excused absences, the state has no legal obligation to provide access, coordination or public funding for abortion including on campuses.

### **Funding Disparity between Abortion and Healthy Birth**

However, in 2023 the state enacted the **Reproductive Health Services Plan** to mandate abortion promotion on all college campuses. Amendments to appropriate equal funding to lifesaving alternatives to abortion, like adoption referral, were rejected.

The legislative record reflects a significant funding disparity between the "Reproductive Health" mandate (Section 15-136) and the original "Pregnant and Parenting" support mandate (Section 15-140):

- **Abortion Mandates:** Backed by **\$38.9 million** in specific state grants, training funds, and provider subsidies.
- **Healthy Birth/Adoption Mandates:** Currently have **\$0.00** in specific state appropriations. The Fiscal Note for the original Pregnant and Parenting legislation (HB771/SB741) states that these requirements must be met using "**existing resources.**" This means universities must divert money from their current general operating funds.

Based on testimony from the 2024 session, the focus was on the *availability* of the option, as advocates noted that students previously had "zero" formal resources for adoption on many campuses. As of January 2026, there is **no publicly available data** on the specific number of adoption referrals made by Maryland schools under these laws.

### **Bill Goes Further than Title IX**

**No Conscience Protections** - This bill does not contain a conscience clause to protect the rights of faculty or staff who do not want to participate in abortion coordination or practices. Existing conscience protections in state law for medical providers are insufficient and would not automatically extend to college staff.

**Referrals to Abortion Providers** – The existing program requires that pregnant students be referred to state programs that fund abortions including the Maryland Medical Assistance Program and the Maryland Children's Health Insurance Program. In 2023, the state reports that 12,727 abortions were committed and abortionists were reimbursed \$7.9 million in taxpayer funds under the Medical Assistance Program. Less than 11 of those taxpayer-funded abortions were for reasons of rape, incest or to save the physical life of the mother.

State referral practices are extremely problematic, as the Maryland Department of Health and the Maryland Department of Education routinely refer pregnant women to Planned Parenthood despite the fact that only 14% of their facilities provide even minimal prenatal care, and their advertised adoption counseling services have been proven to be negligible but intended instead to serve as a feeder system for abortion sales.

**Coordination of Abortion Services** - This bill requires that all colleges and universities coordinate services through an undefined "referral network of health care providers".

In 2023, the members of the Maryland General Assembly enacted Chapters 250 and 251 - *Public Senior Higher Education Institutions – Reproductive Health Services Plans – Requirements*, now Section 15-136 of

the Education Article of the Maryland Code. The Assembly codified your clear intention to mandate abortion on campuses, by requiring the coordination of abortion services while rejecting amendments to provide students resources or referrals for healthy birth and delivery outcomes. Section 15-136 already requires that colleges and universities develop and implement reproductive health services plans to provide or refer students to a “comprehensive” range of reproductive health services, expressly including abortion (See additional details below.) *Pregnant and Parenting Student legislation* is inextricably linked to **Section 15-136**, which mandates abortion referrals. Whether a student is referred to an abortion provider under Section 15-140 depends on which office they visit and how the university has integrated its legal mandates.

Because of the state of Maryland's abortion bias, the state systemically discriminates against pro-life organizations and providers and excludes them from participation in any state programs or procurement contracts claiming they do not provide “comprehensive” care because they will not commit or refer for abortions. Conversely the state routinely entrusts the profit-minded abortion industry and their network to define and implement state programs to target pregnant women and students, despite the fact that after nearly 50 years of taxpayer subsidization, they have failed to eliminate unplanned pregnancies.

### **State is in Violation of Title IX**

It is MDRTL’s position that the State of Maryland is in direct violation of Title IX by refusing to provide pregnant students in public universities and colleges equal accommodation or access to pro-life providers and lifesaving alternatives to abortion. In 2023, the members of the Maryland General Assembly enacted Chapters 250 and 251 - *Public Senior Higher Education Institutions – Reproductive Health Services Plans – Requirements*, now Section 15-136 of the Education Article of the Maryland Code. The Assembly codified your clear intention to mandate abortion on campuses, by requiring the coordination of abortion services while rejecting amendments to provide students resources or referrals for healthy birth and delivery outcomes.

### **State is Engaging in Abortion Coercion**

As a result of the state’s blatant abortion bias and systemic discrimination against pro-life speech and providers, the state is depriving women real choice and engaging in constructive abortion coercion. Under current Maryland law, there is no explicit measure prohibiting any individual from coercing a woman into abortion.

The *majority* of women who have had abortions (64%) report afterward that they were pressured into the decision. With the documented severity of physical and psychological repercussions of abortion, protection from abortion coercion becomes even more essential in ensuring that the best interests of students are protected. But this bill will require colleges and universities to refer pregnant students to providers who may coerce them into using abortion drugs or procedures for their own financial gain.

Coercion encompasses any situation in which a pregnant mother is made to feel - by any means - that she has *no choice* but an abortion. Coercion sends a mother into the belief that *either the baby dies or I will die or suffer great harm*, which may include losing a scholarship, being displaced from a team or even temporarily delaying education.

The abortion industry self-identifies as *pro-choice*, but in reality, choice has little to do with the abortion transaction. Far from enshrining protections from coercion, the abortion industry operates on omission: they omit important questions about coercion during pre-abortion "counseling" and fail to provide information about the effects of a coerced abortion.

Abortion providers also have demonstrated an unwillingness to protect women and girls against sexual abuse and trafficking by refusing to report suspected abuse to law enforcement or other public authorities while agreeing to commit abortions on suspected victims.

### **State Government Obligation to Parents and Students**

Parents send their daughters to college for an education, not for an abortion. The State of Maryland has an obligation to provide a safe and healthy environment for all students attending institutes of higher education within this state. The state cannot reasonably entrust abortion providers and others who stand to gain financially from the sale of abortions, with the education and care of pregnant students.

The bill undermines parental rights to make medical decisions for their children as many young adults remain on their parents' insurance policies until the age of twenty-six. However, parents who do not have the right to consent to abortion procedures for their children, will be financially responsible for any medical or psychological health interventions necessary as a result of abortion injuries or death. By enacting this bill the state will violate the trust of parents and far exceed its limited authority to act in place of the parents on campus, particularly in the matter of student health.

### **MDRTL Opposes Public Funding for Abortion on Campus**

It is MDRTL's position that the state of Maryland is failing in its fiduciary responsibility to state taxpayers and failing to provide for the legitimate healthcare needs of pregnant women and girls in Maryland.

The fact that the number of abortions is highest among college-aged students, demonstrates that decades of public funding to abortion activists in Maryland k-12 public education, has failed to prepare our youth with sound family planning practices. Throwing additional public funding toward the multi-billion dollar abortion industry's failed practices, is not sound fiscal policy and harms those most in need of quality maternal health care options.

Maryland taxpayers should not be forced to subsidize abortion indoctrination, promotion and abortion violence. **A 2026 Marist poll showed that 54% of people polled oppose the use of tax dollars to pay for abortion and 88% favor laws that protect both the lives of women and unborn children.** Public funds instead should be prioritized to fund legitimate health and family planning services which have the objective of saving the lives of both mother and children, including programs for improving maternal health and birth and delivery outcomes, well baby care, parenting classes, foster care reform and affordable adoption programs.

Pregnant women and students have better alternatives for maternal health. There are 14 federally qualifying health centers and 4 pregnancy centers for each Planned Parenthood in Maryland. Planned Parenthood profits from abortion sales and is not a significant provider of prenatal care or adoption referrals.

## **Funding restrictions are constitutional**

The Supreme Court of the United States, in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health* (2022), overturned *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and held that there is no right to abortion found in the Constitution of the United States. As early as 1980 the Supreme Court affirmed in *Harris v. McRae*, that *Roe* had created a limitation on government, not a government funding entitlement. The Court ruled that the government may distinguish between abortion and other procedures in funding decisions -- noting that “*no other procedure involves the purposeful termination of a potential life*”, and held that there is “*no limitation on the authority of a State to make a value judgment favoring childbirth over abortion, and to implement that judgment by the allocation of public funds.*”

## **Abortion is not healthcare**

Abortion is not healthcare. It is violence and brutality that ends the lives of unborn children through suction, dismemberment or chemical poisoning. The fact that 85% of OB-GYNs in a representative national survey do not perform abortions on their patients is glaring evidence that abortion is not an essential part of women's healthcare.

Recent acts of abortion activists occupying the Maryland General Assembly have completely removed abortion from the spectrum of healthcare. As a result of the *Abortion Care Access Act* of 2022, sponsored by Delegate Ariana Kelly (D-Montgomery), a former NARAL employee, poor women will be deprived access to care through a licensed physician. To the detriment of women's reproductive health, the state is now allowing any “certified provider of abortion care” to perform or provide both surgical and chemical abortion through birth.

Combine this with the fact that nearly 75% of abortions are now “Do-It-Yourself” abortions where women are remotely prescribed dangerous abortion pills without a physician's examination and are left to hemorrhage alone until their bodies forcefully expel their babies' bodies, and the argument that abortion is healthcare is completely discredited.

## **Abortion is a Failed Policy**

Nearly fifty years of federal abortion mandates on the state have failed to cure the underlying socio-economic challenges women face in raising their families. The abortion industry has failed to reduce pregnancies, but only reduced the number of *live births*. In fact, the number of abortions has increased proportionately with the increase in public funding for abortion businesses.

Planned Parenthood and their network of organizations are financially invested in unplanned pregnancies that increase abortion profits. They cannot be trusted to instruct children and young adults in human reproduction and sexuality or to promote their abortion business under the guise of student “health”.

The fact that the number of abortions is highest among college-aged students, demonstrates that decades of public funding to abortion activists in Maryland k-12 public education, has failed to prepare our youth with sound family planning practices. Throwing additional public funding toward the multi-billion dollar

abortion industry's failed practices, is not sound fiscal policy and harms those most in need of quality maternal health care options.

**Disparate Impact Statement: Abortion is having a genocidal impact on Black Marylanders**

Abortion has a disproportionate impact on Black Americans who have long been targeted by the abortion industry for eugenics purposes. Even today 78% of abortion clinics are located in minority communities. As a result abortion violence has become the leading killer of Black lives, more than gun violence and all other causes combined. More than half of all pregnancies to Black women in Baltimore City end through abortion violence.

The state fails to measure or report the correlation between the increased use of abortion with increased risk to maternal mortality, infertility, miscarriage, pre-term births for Black mothers. This makes any argument that abortion is healthcare a morally repugnant call for state-sponsored genocide of Black children in Maryland.

**For these reasons we respectfully urge you to issue an unfavorable report on this bill and encourage the sponsor to introduce a bill that is narrowly tailored to ensure that pregnant students are provided access to lifesaving alternatives to abortion without fear of abortion coercion on campus.**

**SB420\_USM\_INFO.pdf**

Uploaded by: Andy Clark

Position: INFO



**SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

**Senate Bill 420**

**Public Institutions of Higher Education - Pregnant and Parenting Students – Plan and Reporting  
February 10, 2026  
Information**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on Senate Bill 420. The bill directs the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) to collect data from public colleges and universities on students' parental status – including whether they are parents or guardians, age of children, single parenting, or sharing parenting responsibilities – and to standardize and report this information annually beginning September 1, 2027. It also mandates that each public institution adopt and publicly post, by October 1, a Title IX–aligned plan for pregnant and parenting students, including referrals for support services (such as WIC, childcare scholarships, medical assistance, and adoption services), information on institutional accommodations, and links to on- and off-campus health providers. The plan must be accessible online by the stated deadline, and the Commission must implement regulations to ensure uniform data collection and timely reporting.

The USM is comprised of twelve distinguished institutions, and three regional centers. We award eight out of every ten bachelor's degrees in the State. Each of USM's 12 institutions has a distinct and unique approach to the mission of educating students and promoting the economic, intellectual, and cultural growth of its surrounding community. These institutions are located throughout the state, from Western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, with the flagship campus in the Washington suburbs. The USM includes three Historically Black Institutions, comprehensive institutions and research universities, and the country's largest public online institution.

The University System of Maryland (USM) believes equal treatment and support for pregnant and parenting students is critical to ensuring that all female students have equal access to educational opportunities. The campuses that comprise the USM have consistently implemented timely policies to keep these students in school, ensure their children's health – and in the end get closer their diploma and college completion.

Senate Bill 420 seeks to standardize statewide policies for supporting pregnant and parenting students, including data collection and mandated plans across public institutions. While the intent to provide resources is commendable, these supports are most effective when managed at the campus level, where information can be updated quickly and tailored to individual needs. USM institutions already allow pregnant students to request academic accommodations through designated support offices, addressing circumstances on a

case-by-case basis in alignment with ADA requirements. This approach ensures flexibility for the unique and time-sensitive nature of pregnancy and related conditions, without the administrative delays inherent in statewide policy updates.

The U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights enforces Title IX, which prohibits sex-based discrimination in federally funded education programs and explicitly protects pregnant and parenting students. This includes safeguarding their right to remain enrolled and receive equal access during pregnancy, childbirth, recovery, and related conditions. However, addressing these shortcomings through state-level mandates, may raise questions from student affairs professionals about whether duplicative regulation is the best solution when federal standards already exist. Strengthening awareness and compliance at the institutional level may offer a more agile and effective approach than layering additional mandatory reporting requirements.

The institutions within the USM fully recognize and uphold the rights of pregnant and parenting students under Title IX. Our leadership and staff are deeply committed to supporting these students, not only because it is a legal obligation, but because it aligns with our shared goal of increasing completion rates and fostering student success. Campuses continuously monitor what works, identify barriers, and adapt resources to meet evolving needs throughout the semester. This proactive, student-centered approach ensures that motivated students facing the challenges of parenthood have the support they need to thrive academically and complete their degrees.

The USM appreciates the opportunity to provide this information regarding Senate Bill 420.



# **College Promise - Prepared Statement by John Barns**

Uploaded by: John Barnshaw

Position: INFO



## **Prepared Statement by Dr. John Barnshaw, Senior Leader with College Promise on Maryland Senate Bill 420**

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is John Barnshaw, and I am a Senior Leader at College Promise. College Promise is a national, nonpartisan nonprofit organization working to ensure all students can access the education and support they need to achieve social and economic mobility. Founded in 2015, we champion a growing network of “Promise programs”—local and statewide initiatives that help students afford college and succeed to and through college. Today, more than 450 Promise programs operate across all 50 states—a remarkable expansion from just 53 programs a decade ago.

I would like to share insights about SB 420 and how it impacts Promise students across Maryland.

Over the past two years, through my work at College Promise, I have collaborated with Promise programs, state legislatures and higher education professionals in Maryland and across the United States to better understand the landscape for student parents. Currently, there are six states that have passed legislation around statewide data collection, and this bill proposed would be among the most comprehensive to date.

Student parent data collection is essential for understanding the future of not only higher education in Maryland, but also the workforce. Today, I would like to discuss the importance of data collection not only for student mothers, but also student fathers.

In research that I published late last year, there are approximately three million undergraduate student parents, of which approximately 875,000 are fathers. In ten years time, the United States will be short more than 29.5 million jobs that require a postsecondary degree that are under the age of 55. I estimate that **10.4 million fathers** with high school diplomas or some college experience represent one of the largest target populations for potential college enrollment growth and securing greater prosperity for themselves, their families, and the state of Maryland. This substantial group includes both fathers who have never enrolled in higher education, and those who have started, but not completed their higher education journey, highlighting the significant potential for educational engagement and re-engagement among this population. What we know about student fathers is that they are more likely to be currently employed, more likely to be veterans, more likely to be working in an occupation that is aligned to their professional degree. In short, these student fathers make excellent candidates for the

workforce, yet there is a shortage of them in the state of Maryland and the United States with the in-demand skills. Maryland can help close this gap with SB 420.

In closing, I want to acknowledge that revisiting and refining higher education requires both courage and commitment. The willingness to improve upon what has already been accomplished in Maryland speaks to this committee's dedication to Maryland's students.

I thank you for your thoughtful consideration of these remarks and for your efforts to strengthen the support for student parents. As stated in SB 420, this bill seeks to improve data collection and planning for student parents. These goals align directly with College Promise's mission and with the needs we hear from students across the state.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony.

Thank you for your time and attention.

John Barnshaw, Ph.D.

Senior Leader, College Promise

February 5, 2026

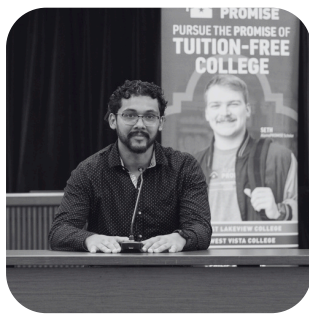
# **College Promise - Student Parents - 2025.pdf**

Uploaded by: John Barnshaw

Position: INFO

# Policy Brief

## COLLEGE PROMISE



Top to Bottom: Jericho Doherty, Alamo Colleges Scholar; Bryan Barney, Hope Chicago Parent Scholar; Brandon Keyes, University of Michigan Graduate and Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer

## Ready to Learn, Ready to Work: How Student Fathers Can Transform America's Workforce

**JOHN BARNSHAW, PH.D., SENIOR LEADER, COLLEGE PROMISE**  
**CATHERINE MILLETT, PH.D., SENIOR LEADER, COLLEGE PROMISE**

### Executive Summary

America faces a workforce crisis that an overlooked population could help solve. While employers will need to fill 9.7 million new jobs paying over \$90,000 annually by 2035, nearly 14 million fathers with children under 18 have some college but no degree (1). These men, many from communities that have historically faced barriers to educational access, bring motivation and real-world experience that higher education has yet to embrace fully.

A national convening in San Antonio brought together over 80 higher education leaders, policymakers, researchers, Promise programs, community partners, and students to address this opportunity. What emerged was clear: student fathers remain "the invisible of the invisible" on college campuses, yet supporting them yields remarkable returns: \$5.36 for every dollar invested, with bachelor's degree holders earning 31% more over their lifetimes (2).

### The solution requires a three-tier approach:

- Foundational support ensures the basics are right by tracking student progress through data collection, expanding access via reconnect programs, and creating bridge programs for adult learners.
- Integrative support connects services strategically, providing priority registration, offering virtual and hybrid classes, assigning dedicated navigators, and utilizing data to proactively meet student needs.
- Comprehensive support builds lifecycle systems, linking education and workforce data, providing wrap-around supports, and focusing on credentials that lead to family-sustaining wages.

Six states (California, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Oregon, and Texas) have already passed laws requiring the collection of student parent data. Thirty-five states offer higher education at no tuition costs for adults, and proven models, such as CUNY's programs, show 64% completion rates versus 43% for comparable students (3).

The opportunity is unprecedented: supporting student fathers creates generational change—when fathers succeed, children see education modeled, family economic stability improves, and communities benefit from skilled workers who remain locally invested. The tools exist; now, leadership commitment is needed.

**"When we focus on student fathers, we have the opportunity to change generations." — Rosye Cloud, Interim CEO of College Promise.**

### **The Hidden Workforce Solution**

Behind this gathering lies a compelling reality: a significant workforce solution is already in place, and its members are engaged and motivated. While 875,000 student fathers currently navigate higher education, 13.1 million additional fathers with children under 18 have high school diplomas or some college but no degree. These men, many from communities that have historically faced barriers to educational access, bring motivation and real-world experience that higher education has yet to embrace fully. The most effective support strategies benefit all student parents, creating stronger coalitions for change (4).

The timing couldn't be more critical. By 2035, employers will need to fill 9.7 million new jobs paying over \$90,000 annually that require postsecondary credentials. Meanwhile, traditional college enrollment is declining while nearly half of current degree holders will be 55 or older, creating workforce challenges that demand innovative solutions. Supporting credential-ready fathers who bring work experience, maturity, and powerful motivation to succeed could play an important role in addressing these gaps.

### **What the Convening Uncovered**

This convergence of opportunity and need is precisely what drove the San Antonio convening. Representatives from 12 higher education institutions, 12 national organizations, including the Urban Institute, and six community partners, such as the YMCA of Greater San Antonio, came together to explore how higher education could better serve this population. What they uncovered was both troubling and promising.

The troubling reality is that student fathers remain "the invisible of the invisible," their unique strengths and needs consistently overlooked, despite comprising nearly 900,000 students nationwide. But this invisibility also revealed the opportunity; institutions have been missing a population that could help address both educational equity and workforce development goals.

### **Understanding the Unique Challenge**

The convening participants quickly discovered why traditional adult learner supports fall short for student fathers. Unlike childless adult learners, student fathers simultaneously balance three demanding roles: parent, provider, and student. This balancing act creates specific challenges that require targeted approaches beyond standard supports. The numbers tell the story: Among the nearly 600,000 student fathers working more than 30 hours weekly, about one-third experience financial shortfalls six or more times a year due to family costs, such as childcare and healthcare. Nearly one-quarter are veterans whose dual identity as fathers and service members often goes unrecognized by campus support systems. Daily responsibilities, such as caring for sick children, managing school closures, and responding to family needs, require flexible academic structures. Yet, most institutions still operate on rigid schedules designed for traditional-age students.

The Investment Opportunity



“At the Alamo Colleges District, we believe in meeting students where they are and designing pathways that reflect the realities of their lives. Student fathers are a vital part of our college communities, and too often, their experiences go unseen in higher education policy and practice. This convening represents a critical opportunity to share data, elevate voices, and create actionable solutions to ensure student fathers and all parents can thrive in college, career, and life.” – Dr. Mike Flores, Alamo Colleges District Chancellor

Yet these challenges shouldn't obscure the remarkable return on investment that supporting student fathers represents. For individuals, bachelor's degree holders earn 31% more over their lifetimes than high school graduates. For society, supporting student parents yields \$5.36 for every dollar invested. More importantly, research and practice converged in San Antonio to reveal evidence-based approaches that can benefit both individual families and workforce development goals.

**This convergence of research, practice, and economic opportunity points toward a clear path forward.**

**A Framework for Action**

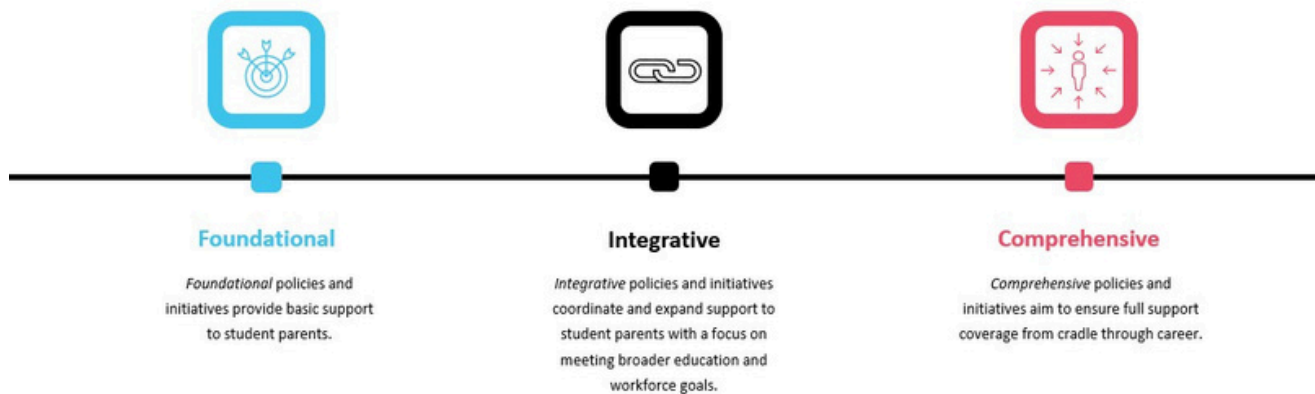
What follows are the actionable strategies that emerged from this unprecedented gathering—a roadmap for better supporting student fathers while contributing to America's skilled workforce needs.

**A Three-Tier Framework for Action**

The San Antonio convening identified that student fathers need layered support. States and institutions can start at any level and build momentum:

Figure 1: Policy Framework for Student Parents

**Policy Framework for Student Parents**



## Level 1: Foundational Support

### Get the basics right first

- Track student fathers with data collection. Six states (California, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Oregon, and Texas) now require colleges to identify and track student parents. Without data, there's no way to measure progress or allocate resources effectively.
- Expand access through reconnect programs. Promise programs in thirty-five states offer higher education at no tuition costs, so adults don't have to pay for college. Covering tuition removes a significant barrier for student parents who often face competing financial pressures. Massachusetts recently invested \$117 million, with Michigan and Louisiana following suit (5).
- Create bridge programs for adult learners. Wichita State's program, which supports 2,200 adult learners, demonstrates how a structured orientation helps student fathers navigate college systems (6).

## Level 2: Integrative Support

### Connect services strategically

- Provide priority registration. California became the first state to give student parents first choice of classes—essential when 85% of courses happen during traditional work hours.
- Assign dedicated navigators. Minnesota and Texas now require staff to help student parents coordinate childcare, healthcare, and academic support. Austin Community College's family-centered model demonstrates this approach works (7).
- Use data proactively. Washington state surveys 11,000 students to identify needs, then automatically connects eligible student parents to state benefits (8).

### SPOTLIGHT: CUNY's Wrap-Around Support Model

The City University of New York (CUNY) demonstrates that comprehensive support is an effective approach. Their programs—Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP), CUNY Reconnect for adult learners, and Accelerate, Complete, Engage (ACE) for bachelor's programs—provide scholarships, priority registration, textbooks, personalized advising, transportation, and childcare coordination.

The results speak for the ASAP program itself:

- 64% completion rate vs. 43% for comparable students
- \$3 returned to taxpayers for every \$1 invested
- \$46 million in net fiscal benefits

These programs show that upfront investment in comprehensive support pays dividends for students, institutions, and communities.

## Level 3: Comprehensive Support

### Build lifecycle systems

- Link education and workforce data. California connects student parent data to its statewide system tracking progress from early childhood through career advancement.
- Provide wrap-around supports. CUNY's programs offer scholarships, priority registration, advising, and childcare coordination. Result: 64% completion rate versus 43% for comparable students, with \$3 returned for every \$1 invested (9).
- Focus on credentials of value. Texas defines success as affordable degrees leading to jobs that pay more than high school wages—and aligns all policy around this goal (10).

**SPOTLIGHT: California's Cradle-to-Career Data Integration**

California's Assembly Bill 2881 demonstrates how to connect student-parent support to statewide education goals. The legislation creates a three-part strategy:

- Collect student parent data to help students reach educational goals
- Align data to meet the statewide goal of 70% of Californians with postsecondary credentials
- Link student parent data to California's Cradle-to-Career Data System

The California C2C Data System (12) is a public, statewide longitudinal system that tracks student progress, social service use, and postsecondary experiences from early childhood through career advancement.

The impact: By including student fathers in this comprehensive system, policymakers can identify needs, track progress, and develop targeted policies that improve both educational and workforce outcomes—insights impossible without statewide integration.

Key takeaway: Linking student parent data to broader state systems amplifies impact and demonstrates a return on investment.

**What States Can Do**

Start with legislation that works:

- Require student parent data collection. Six states have passed statutes. A more detailed, companion College Promise Student Fathers Landscape Analysis provides greater details and examples.
- Expand reconnect programs. Cover tuition costs for adults over 25.
- Mandate priority registration for student parents at public institutions.
- Fund student parent navigators to coordinate support services.
- Align education and workforce goals around credentials that lead to family-sustaining wages.

**SPOTLIGHT: Addressing Pushback on Student Parent Policies**

Policies that provide specific benefits to student parents, like priority registration, can face pushback for appearing to favor one group. However, state leaders successfully frame these policies as supporting broader goals, such as increasing college attainment and addressing workforce shortages.

- Texas legislators emphasized that parent liaisons play a crucial role in delivering resources to support student success, ultimately benefiting the entire state's educational goals ([House Bill 1361](#)).
- Michigan Governor Whitmer (11) signed an executive directive focused on young men and fathers, noting the state's goal to reach 60% postsecondary attainment by 2030. In the Michigan Reconnect program, women outnumber men by a ratio of 2 to 1. As the governor stated: "Too many men don't have the resources they need to succeed... I'll keep working with anyone to make sure that everyone can make it in Michigan."

Key strategy: Position student parent support as essential for meeting statewide education and workforce goals, not special treatment.

**What Employers Can Do**

Student fathers need workplace partners:

- Offer family-friendly internships with flexible schedules and childcare support.
- Hire locally—student fathers' family ties create stable, committed employees.
- Provide family-sustaining benefits like healthcare and childcare assistance.

**The Bottom Line**

The evidence is compelling: supporting student fathers yields significant economic returns while creating generational change. Bachelor's degree holders earn 31% more over their lifetimes, and every dollar invested in student parent support returns \$5.36.

The tools and successful models exist—what's needed is leadership commitment. Whether starting with data collection, integrating existing resources, or building comprehensive support systems, student fathers represent untapped workforce potential and an opportunity to strengthen families for generations.

**Call to Action**

The convening made clear that student parents need immediate action. Jericho Doherty, a student father in the Alamo Colleges District, shared his powerful journey of balancing college, work, and parenting, reminding participants that investing in student fathers means investing in families and communities. Amber Angel from the ECMC Foundation, herself a former student parent, emphasized that student parents must be visible drivers of policy change, not invisible populations.

**The time for action is now. Student fathers can't wait for perfect policies; they need champions who will start where they are and build momentum.**

State Policymakers	Higher Education Leaders	Employers	Advocates and Philanthropists
Introduce student parent data collection legislation this session.	Begin tracking student fathers on your campus immediately.	Create family-friendly internship pilots with local colleges.	Fund demonstration projects at receptive institutions.
Implement or expand reconnect programs to serve fathers better.	Implement priority registration for student parents next semester.	Review hiring practices to support working student fathers better.	Support research on long-term economic impacts.
Fund pilot navigator programs at public institutions.	Identify one community partner for childcare support.	Offer benefits that recognize family responsibilities.	Amplify successful models to drive policy adoption.

Student fathers are ready to learn and ready to work. The question is: are we ready to lead? The workforce crisis demands bold action, and student fathers offer a proven solution. Let's give them—and America's economic future—the support they deserve.

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