

# EQUITY FOR ALL KIDS



To: Chair Pinsky and members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
From: Shamoyia Gardiner, Education Policy Director  
Re: Senate Bill 791: County Boards of Education – Pregnant and Parenting Students – Policies and Reports  
Date: March 3, 2020  
Position: Support

More than 600,000 teens get pregnant annually, with about 1 in 4 girls in the United States getting pregnant before the age of 20.<sup>1</sup> The implications are staggering: of youth who drop out nationally, about 33% of girls and 20% of boys say that becoming a parent was a major factor influencing them to leave school.<sup>2</sup> **Only 51% of women who gave birth as teens have a high school diploma, as compared to 89% of women who did not.**<sup>3</sup> Teen mothers of color no doubt experience even harsher consequences in outcomes, as Black girls are susceptible to adultification, a phenomenon in which decidedly adult characteristics of maturity, intention, hyper-sexuality, and independence are ascribed to children by adults in positions of authority.

Research exists to demonstrate that teen fathers are also negatively impacted and that the severity of these impacts operate in a racialized context. Teenage parents have worse socioeconomic outcomes than their peers who waited to have children, and **Black teen fathers, even though they report greater parental support in their transition to adulthood, face more socioeconomic disadvantages than their White peers.**<sup>4</sup> For all teen fathers, workforce participation for the purposes of supporting a family is associated with a decreased investment in meeting educational milestones.

Expectant and parenting students, a term which includes pregnant students and their partners, usually teen fathers, have unique needs and are technically protected by Title IX regulations which govern federally funded education programs and activities. However, legislative protections are only as effective as their enforcement, and the disparate data above suggests that enforcement is limited at best. **There is nothing inherent in a pregnant, expectant, or parenting student that renders them intellectually incapable of performing academically, so we must addressing needs inherent in the circumstances of these populations to get to the root cause of disparities in their educational outcomes.**

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<sup>1</sup> Healthy Teen Network. "Public Policy Recommendation: Ensure Pregnant and Parenting Student Access to Education" October 6, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> ibid

<sup>3</sup> ibid

<sup>4</sup> Assini Meytin, Luciana C. "Variations in Teen Mothers and Teen Fathers' Socioeconomic Attainment in Adulthood: Exploring the Role of Family Support and Adult Identity". University of Maryland Digital Repository. 2017.

The need for the adoption of the specific policies outlined in SB 791—from the coordinator position to the lactation space to the modified attendance policies—cannot be understated. This bill will better position local education agencies to serve their diverse enrollment populations by utilizing empirically-backed models to address the circumstances and needs of pregnant, expectant, and parenting students. The ramifications of not acting now will continue to be felt by the students themselves, but will also have long-term, intergenerational impacts for their children. **We won't be able to prevent negative intergenerational impacts if we don't begin to prioritize the needs of expectant and parenting students now.**

SB 791 will catalyze the critically necessary work of evaluating the status and needs of pregnant, expectant, and parenting students in Maryland. **ACY strongly urges a favorable report on this bill.**