

SB0791 County Boards of Education – Pregnant and Parenting Students – Policies and Reports
March 3, 2020
Position: Support

Dear Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee Members,

I am writing in support of SB0791, County Boards of Education – Pregnant and Parenting Students – Policies and Reports.

I am a clinical social worker and have been working with teen parents as part of a nonprofit ministry in Baltimore City for the past six years. I have found through my precious experience and working within the city that the resources available from school to school are quite different. Students within the city are often living in at-risk conditions and need more resources to be able to ensure the health of their baby and themselves, yet it seems the resources are most challenging to obtain. Students are often unaware of how to access programs, and even if they become aware of a resource, the process is often difficult without transportation and language barriers. Students that are immigrants are often fearful of trying to get help because they are concerned about deportation. Many students are in their final months of pregnancy and don't know what to expect at delivery time and are not prepared with the basic things they need to bring their baby home from the hospital like a car seat. After the birth of the child, they are not given homeschooling and are expected to return to school and begin their regular schedule again within weeks. Many cannot return to school due to a lack of proper childcare. Having a daycare at the school would be a win for everyone. The student could return to school without trying to find daycare. For students who can secure childcare, transportation to get their child to the program, and then getting transportation back to school through public transportation can take many bus changes and over an hour. If childcare was available on-site, students could be required to take a childcare course to learn how to better care for their children, and social workers could assist with monitoring the children while they are at the school.

I have found that young moms welcome the opportunity to take more childcare courses because they always need guidance to manage various issues. In addition, having childcare at the school would create the opportunity for the father of the child to become involved if he is also a student and begin to bond with their child. Supporting the student parents at this time is critical and will yield long term positive benefits for two generations of youth. Students who receive support and encouragement are much more likely to graduate, and statistics are clear that high school graduates are much more likely to become positive contributors to society. I have consistently seen young moms who choose to keep their babies quickly mature, becoming goal-oriented and having a desire to become more involved in healthy relationships and work toward achieving independent living for themselves and their children. Investing in young parents at this age will most definitely yield many positive outcomes individually and for the community. Most teen parents are fearful, overwhelmed, and unable to receive the support and services they need, which leads to high school dropout, often depression, which puts their child at risk. Students who are supported by education, counseling, resources such as assistance with food and childcare can develop quickly into successful parents with healthy children, which is a win for everyone. Investing in them now is an excellent investment for everyone's future.

Judith K. Phillips, LCSW-C
judy.phillips@mmyfc.org
Patterson Parent Life
Patterson High School
Baltimore City