



SB0470 Institute for Innovation and Implementation - Pregnant, Expectant, and Parenting Students- Data Collection and Reports

Presented to the Hon. Paul Pinsky and
Members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
February 25, 2021 11:00 a.m.

POSITION: SUPPORT

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges the Members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee to issue **a favorable report on SB0470 - Institute for Innovation and Implementation - Pregnant, Expectant, and Parenting Students - Data Collection and Reports**, sponsored by Senator Mary Washington.

Our organization is an advocate for reproductive health, rights, and justice. As part of our efforts to protect reproductive freedom for all Marylanders, we work to ensure every child-bearing individual has the right to decide if, when, and how to form their families. We honor pregnancy in all its complexity. In doing so, we support pregnant, expectant, and parenting youth as they navigate the challenges of building their families in good health, in safety, and with dignity.

We strongly believe that Maryland does not know enough about the educational outcomes of students who become pregnant or parenting while in secondary school, and fear that this is a population of students that have been too long ignored. We call for Maryland to invest in meaningful data collection and reporting to inform future statewide policy efforts. As such, dissemination of data and policy analysis on the status of pregnant and parenting youth in Maryland will serve as important factors in addressing injustices in achieving educational equity. Pregnant and parenting youth in Maryland have a right to be heard and represented, and we believe that a partnership with the University of Maryland's Institute for Innovation in with five school districts to collect data using sound methodology and an analysis of the results with recommendations for policy reform is critical to improving the educational outcomes of this group.

Maryland's public high schools reported a graduation rate of 86.6% in 2019, the lowest rate in recent years, attributing to thousands of students dropping out high school.¹ However, Maryland's public high schools reported that only 49 students formally withdrew during the previous academic year for "pregnancy" or "parenting" reasons.² Pregnant and parenting students who do not provide a reason for leaving school were categorized as "whereabouts unknown", of which there were 4,876 students in the 2017-18 school year.³ This data is inconsistent with national statistics, which show that only 40% of teen mothers finish high school, often leaving due to lack of support systems and resources. Additionally, nationwide, approximately 1/2 of female dropouts, and 1/3 of male dropouts say that becoming a parent was a factor in their decision to

¹ Maryland Report Card. 2019 Progress Report.

https://reportcard.msde.maryland.gov/PrintReports/2019/StateReports/English/2019MDReportCard_ENG.pdf

² Summary of Attendance for Maryland Public Schools 2017-2018

<http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DCAA/SSP/20172018Student/2018Attendance.pdf>

³ Summary of Attendance for Maryland Public Schools 2017-2018

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leave school.⁴ This represents a large percentage of pregnant, expectant, and parenting youth who are dropping out and unreported by school districts. If not appropriately addressed, this number will continue to grow.

Additionally, according to aggregated data collected between 2011 and 2017, 11 counties in Maryland have teen birth rates higher than the national average with Baltimore City and Dorchester County having rates over twice as high.⁵ There were 2,645 births to teenagers under the age of 19 in the state in 2018.⁶ This data shows that there are a large number of students in the state in need of resources and guidance from their schools in order to realize their family formation and education goals.

The partnership with the Institute for Innovation and Implementation will ensure that school administrators are properly trained on accurate data collection methodologies, while respecting the privacy and needs of pregnant, expectant, and parenting youth. Project leaders will monitor, report, and evaluate on school spaces and programs that support these youth, and subsequently provide recommendations and policy changes based on their analysis. This partnership is essential in ensuring the sustainability of data collection for these youth, and their expertise will help reduce the high dropout and school pushout rates across our state. The school districts identified for this project representative of the area with the highest teen birth rates representative of the five major regions in Maryland according the state vital statistic reports.⁷

We believe there is a substantial disconnect between the data Maryland has recorded on the number of children born to youth under the age of 19, and the number of students dropping out of school due to pregnant and parenting reasons. This partnership will directly close these gaps in reporting and data dissemination, and ensure that reproductive equity and justice is being achieved for Maryland's pregnant and parenting youth. Pregnant, expectant, and parenting students have the right to the same rigorous education as their non-pregnant and non-parenting peers. They need not face discrimination, harassment or segregation in their schools based on the decision to parent. We must do all we can to keep these students in school, on track to graduate, and closer to economic security for themselves and their families.

For these reasons, NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland **urges a favorable committee report on SB0470**. Thank you for your time and consideration.

⁴ National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education (NCWGE). Title IX at 40: Working to Ensure Gender Equity in Education. Washington, DC: NCWGE, 2012. <https://www.ncwge.org/TitleIX40/Pregnant-Parenting.pdf>

⁵ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2019). County Health Rankings, Maryland 2011-2017. Teen Birth. <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/maryland/2019/measure/factors/14/data?sort=sc-2>

⁶ Power to Decide: The Campaign to End Unplanned Pregnancy <https://powertodecide.org/what-we-do/information/national-state-data/maryland>

⁷ Maryland Vital Statistics Annual Report 2018, Maryland Department of Health Vital Statistics Administration https://health.maryland.gov/vsa/Documents/Reports%20and%20Data/Annual%20Reports/REV_2018annual.pdf