

MARY L. WASHINGTON, PH.D
Legislative District 43
Baltimore City

Education, Health, and
Environmental Affairs Committee

Chair
Joint Committee on Ending
Homelessness

Chair
Joint Committee on Children,
Youth, and Families



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SUPPORT – SB 438
Public Schools - Pregnant and Parenting Students - Policies and Reports

Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
February 25, 2021
Testimony of Senator Mary Washington

Chair Pinsky, Vice-Chair Kagan and Members of the Committee,

I respectfully urge you to vote favorable on Senate Bill 438, which requires the State Department of Education to establish a model policy to improve the educational outcomes of our 2,000 Maryland students who are pregnant or parenting each year. This policy must include adequate provisions for lactating students including a private space and excusal from class for lactation related needs. In addition schools shall assist and advise the student in acquiring appropriate transportation and child care services if the lack of those services impedes the student's ability to attend school.

Currently, 60% of pregnant and parenting students leave school before they graduate and over 60% of the families that they form live below the poverty line. SB438 calls for school districts to create policies to provide reasonable accommodations for these students. Such measures allow students the same opportunities to a rigorous education as their non-parenting peers. SB438 is designed to increase and improve school attendance and participation.

Having established policies at each school to help identify and make connections to existing resources will benefit pregnant, expectant, and parenting students to plan accordingly on how to stay in school and on track to graduate, as well as when circumstances arise that make the balancing act of being both a parent and a student more difficult and/or challenging. Given the well-documented advantages to earning at least a High School Diploma in the job market, I ask that this committee give SB438 a favorable report in order to increase the odds that parenting students achieve this academic goal and can better provide for themselves and their children.

In partnership,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary Washington". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "M" and a trailing flourish.

Senator Mary Washington, District 43, Baltimore City