

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 438
Public Schools—Pregnant and Parenting Students—Policies and Reports

Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

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Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 438, legislation that requires (among other things) the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to develop a model policy to support the educational and parenting goals and improve the educational outcomes of pregnant and parenting students. Additionally, it requires each local board of education to establish a local policy based on the model policy developed by MSDE.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our 896,837 students for careers and jobs of the future. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

Educators know that the single best place for our students to be in order to best provide them with a world-class education is in our classrooms and school buildings. However, there are times when, due to extenuating circumstances, our students are either unable to physically be present in their classes or situations arise that make uninterrupted school attendance very challenging. This is particularly the case for our students who are pregnant and parenting. Every effort must be made—to the extent practicable—to prevent extenuating circumstances from leading to an interruption in our students' learning.

It is with this in mind that MSEA supports this legislation. We see it as a reasonable effort to assist our pregnant and parenting students with the types of resources and supports they need so that they can properly carry out their responsibilities to both their children and their educational goals. Furthermore, this makes it possible for our school communities to provide for our current students while simultaneously aiding in the establishment of a firm foundation upon which our future students will



build their educational careers. Said differently, this is an exceptional way to support our children from crib to commencement.

Our young people have more than enough to contend with during their adolescence. Far too often, our schools are unable to minimize or prevent the myriad hardships our students face. In this case, however, our schools and districts have the means to provide the guidance and resources young people need to manage their roles as students and parents. MSEA supports this effort because it is about equity and because it is the right thing to do.

We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 438.