
BILL NO.: Senate Bill 438
TITLE: Public Schools - Pregnant and Parenting Students - Policies and Reports
COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
DATE: February 25, 2021
POSITION: SUPPORT

Senate Bill 438 would require the State Department of Education to establish model policies to provide accommodations for pregnant and parenting students in the public school system. This includes policies to include lactation spaces, assistance with child care, and approved leave for parenting needs. It would further require appropriate training for faculty and staff and create a liaison within the school systems for pregnant and parenting students.

Parenting is a leading cause of drop out among teen girls. Approximately 30% of female secondary school students who have dropped out state that pregnancy or parenting was a key reason for leaving school. The enacting of HB616 - Education - Pregnant and Parenting Students - Attendance Policy in 2017 was an effort to strengthen the ability of pregnant and parenting teens to continue their education and to obtain the support they need to be able to stay in school. That law provides for opportunities for support and ability for young parents to manage issues of health care, parenting and other issues surrounding being pregnant, with their education. High School dropout rates are directly correlated to higher levels of unemployment and lower earnings. In fact, a woman with a high school degree earns on average nearly two hundred dollars more per week than a woman who has not completed high school¹. Unfortunately, Maryland's public schools reported that 49 students formally withdrew from school during the 2017-2018 academic year for "pregnancy" or "parenting" reasons², while nationwide, approximately only 40% of teen mothers finish high school³.

The Women's Law Center supports all women, regardless of age, socio-economic status, or parenting status and believes in their capacity for growth and success. Education is a key component for ensuring each student lives up to their potential. SB 438 would further aid these students by providing support and opportunities necessary to allow these young women to achieve.

For the above reasons, the Women's Law Center of Maryland urges a favorable report for SB 438.

The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a private, non-profit, membership organization that serves as a leading voice for justice and fairness for women. It advocates for the rights of women through legal assistance to individuals and strategic initiatives to achieve systemic change.

¹ Bureau of Labor and Statistics, <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2015/median-weekly-earnings-by-education-gender-race-and-ethnicity-in-2014.htm>

² Shuger, L. (2012). Teen Pregnancy and High School Dropout: What Communities are Doing to Address These Issues.

³ Summary of Attendance for Maryland Public Schools 2017-2018,

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