



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE † ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON † DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

February 3, 2021

House Bill 439
Institute for Innovation and Implementation – Pregnant, Expecting, and Parenting
Students – Data Collection and Report

House Ways and Means Committee

Position: SUPPORT

The Maryland Catholic Conference represents the public policy interests of the three Roman Catholic (arch)dioceses serving Maryland: the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Archdiocese of Washington, and the Diocese of Wilmington, which together encompass over one million Marylanders.

House Bill 439 requires certain counties' boards of education to collect, track and submit data about the number of pregnant and parenting students, their experiences and opportunities for professional development to the Institute for Innovation and Implementation in the University of Maryland School of Social Work. The Institute will then issue a report in four years on the opportunities, challenges and recommendations for pregnant and parenting students.

The Maryland Catholic Conference supports HB 439 because it will record data reflecting the needs of student mothers and fathers to continue their education. Many pregnant and parenting students experience discrimination, lag behind their peers in educational achievement or drop out of school. Educational achievement affects the lifetime income of teen mothers: two-thirds of families started by teens are poor, and nearly one in four will depend on welfare within three years of a child's birth. (*Teen Pregnancy Rates Affects Graduation Rates. National Council on State Legislatures, 2013.*)

Research has also demonstrated a strong link between parents' educational level and children's well-being: Children with more educated parents tend to have better cognitive skills and higher academic achievement than children with less educated parents (*Pew Research Center 2013*). Given the importance of education for pregnant and parenting teens, it is surprising that so little is known about what it takes to encourage, prepare, and support these adolescents.

Too often a student mother or father is forced to choose between their child and their dreams for educational attainment. Tracking and assessing the challenges of pregnant and parent students in high school will help Maryland and the General Assembly learn more about what it takes to encourage, prepare, and support these adolescents.

It is for these reasons that the Conference asks for a favorable report of **House Bill 439**. Thank you for your consideration.