

# EDUCATION EQUITY FOR PREGNANT, EXPECTANT, AND PARENTING STUDENTS ACT 2020

REPRODUCTIVE AND  
EDUCATIONAL  
EQUITY FOR  
MARYLAND  
YOUTH



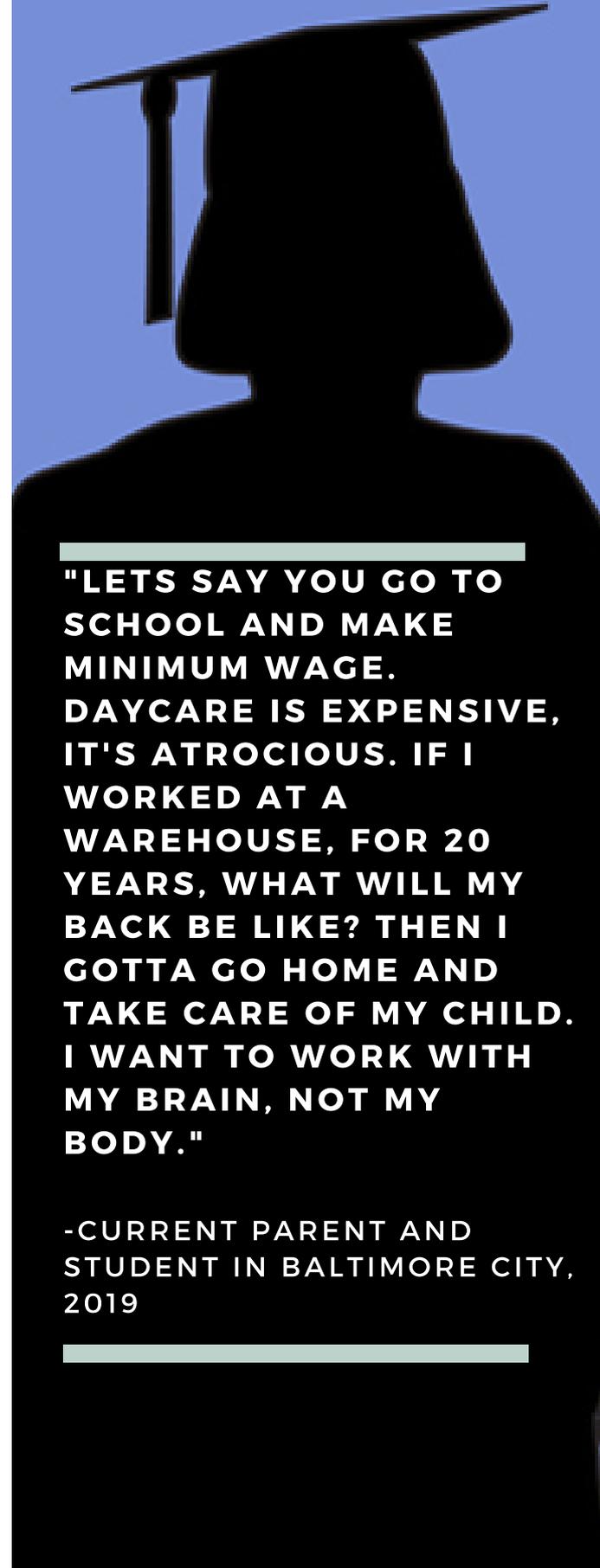
Education is an essential component of reproductive justice as well as an important factor in achieving economic security, enabling individuals to parent with dignity and in safety. On the contrary, youth who are expectant or parenting may not have the resources to navigate parenthood alone, but schools may be the key to providing critical assistance towards their success.

In 2017, approximately 750 youth age 17 and under gave birth in Maryland, with an additional 1,952 births for individuals between 18-19 years of age [1]. While the national teen birthrate as of 2017 has fallen to 18.8 per 1000 women between ages 15-19, 11 counties in Maryland surpass the national average [2]. In all Maryland counties, except Allegany, Hispanic or Black women ages 15-19 make up the greatest proportion of teen births [2].

Preliminary research reveals that many counties lack basic accommodations, like spaces for students to express breast milk, pre- and post-natal health services, and knowledgeable faculty for support. Current systems tracking student educational outcomes in Maryland are negligible, but necessary for determining if schools are providing equitable education. Under Title IX, "school push-out" and other discriminatory practices based on sex, including pregnant and parenting students, are prohibited. However, pregnant and parenting students may experience unwelcoming or stigmatizing school environments. While the passage of HB616 in 2017 establishing excused absences for pregnant and parenting students for medical and legal reasons, these policies are not actively enforced.

It is imperative that we support these students in their academic pursuits and give them the resources needed to raise their own healthy families; yet, to understand what accommodations are needed, the educational outcomes and all barriers to education for these students must be better understood.

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**"LET'S SAY YOU GO TO  
SCHOOL AND MAKE  
MINIMUM WAGE.  
DAYCARE IS EXPENSIVE,  
IT'S ATROCIOUS. IF I  
WORKED AT A  
WAREHOUSE, FOR 20  
YEARS, WHAT WILL MY  
BACK BE LIKE? THEN I  
GOTTA GO HOME AND  
TAKE CARE OF MY CHILD.  
I WANT TO WORK WITH  
MY BRAIN, NOT MY  
BODY."**

**-CURRENT PARENT AND  
STUDENT IN BALTIMORE CITY,  
2019**

# WHAT THIS LEGISLATION DOES

Require the state to mandate school districts to develop specific accommodations for expectant and parenting students, including:

- lactation spaces,
  - on-site childcare or assistance finding affordable childcare,
  - transportation options to ensure expectant and parenting students ease of travel to school, and
  - reasonable leave from during the class to accommodate lactation or childcare coordination needs.
- Existing school faculty will be supported in coordinating onsite and offsite resources for PEPS.
  - Ensuring training opportunities for identified school staff and personnel to provide appropriate support services.

- School districts would collect data tracking educational outcomes for pregnant, expectant, and parenting students (PEPS), and disseminate data to a state body annually over a 3-year period.
- An analysis conducted by the University of Maryland's Institute for Innovation and Implementation and a report detailing policy recommendations on or before June 1, 2024.
- Data collection methods will ensure the privacy of PEPS and will be advised by an independent body of experts on these issues and guided by university researchers.

Policy recommendations identifying contributing factors to school push out or drop out will be informed by focus groups of current or former PEPS. All stakeholders will reflect the racial, ethnic, cultural, and gender diversity of the state.

## WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Nationally, close to half of female dropouts and one-third of male dropouts say that becoming a parent was a factor in their decision to leave school [3]. Nearly two-thirds of families formed by teen mothers live in poverty, with nearly one in four enrolling in welfare benefits after the birth of the first child [4]. **Lower graduation rates affect not only the individual well-being of teenage parents, but also negatively affect our economy as opportunities for meaningful participation in the workforce is diminished.**

In the 2017-18 school years, Maryland Public Schools reported 49 students withdrew from school due to "pregnancy" or "parenting" [5]. Based on the state and county health data related to teen births these statistics grossly under-represent the true number of students who were pushed out of school due to pregnancy or parenting, as they only reflect formal withdrawal. **Based on the dramatic discrepancy in data, it is clear that school systems are inadequately prepared to support this student population, and have failed to accurately represent their reasons for leaving school.**

**Alignment with Kirwan Commission Recommendations** The Kirwan Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education is an initiative to research and develop major funding and policy reforms with the goal of strengthening Maryland's public education system. The need to support vulnerable or underserved student populations is highlighted as one of the key policy areas in Kirwan's 2019 Interim Report. While the report refers to vulnerable "at promise" students in broad terms, the Educational Equity for Pregnant, Expectant and Parenting Student Act is a natural extension of the Kirwan Commission's goal to support marginalized student populations and defend their equitable access to quality education. The PEPS population must be recognized as deserving of investment which upholds their federally protected Title IX rights to enjoy the same educational opportunities and rigorous curriculum as their non-pregnant or non-parenting peers.

[1] Maryland Department of Health, Maryland Vital Statistics Annual Report, 2017, p.75 <https://health.maryland.gov/vsa/Documents/Reports%20and%20Data/Annual%20Reports/2017annual.pdf>

[2] 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>

[3] 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>

[4] National Conference of State Legislatures, Postcard: Teen Pregnancy Affects Graduation Rates, 2013 <http://www.ncsl.org/research/health/teen-pregnancy-affects-graduation-rates-postcard.aspx>

[5] Summary of Attendance for Maryland Public Schools 2017-2018 <http://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DCAA/SSP/20172018Student/2018Attendance.pdf>