



SB0830 - Education – Alternative Schools – Reporting Requirements

Presented to the Hon. Paul Pinsky and
Members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
March 3, 2020 1:00 p.m.

POSITION: SUPPORT

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland **urges the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee a favorable report on SB0830 - Education – Alternative Schools – Reporting Requirements**, sponsored by Senator Cory McCray.

Our organization is an advocate for reproductive health, rights, and justice for all Marylanders. We seek to protect the rights of youth to feel safe at schools, free of gender-based harassment and harmful bias. We recognize that youth are better able to make informed and independent decisions about their own sexual and reproductive lives when free of gender discrimination and stereotypes.

As our organization is an advocate for reproductive freedom, we work to ensure every child-bearing individual has the right to decide if, when, and how to form their families and to parent in good health, in safety, and with dignity. Youth have the same rights as adults in choosing when to form their families. Among our campaigns to ensure reproductive freedom for all Marylanders, we seek to help identify and create effective supports to help pregnant and parenting students stay in school, on track to graduate, and headed towards economic security. Each year, approximately 800 youth from ages 15 to 17 give birth in Maryland, and roughly another 2,200 among those 18 or 19 years-old. Many of these students end up in alternative schools and therefore, SB0830 is essential to understanding further barriers and improvements that can be made to support pregnant and parenting students.

Pregnant and parenting students may experience unwelcoming, inequitable, or stigmatizing school environments. Under Title IX, “school pushout” practices are prohibited, such as lack of accommodations for childcare and lactation, stigmatization and harassment from peers and staff, and involuntary leave from school. ¹ Title IX ensures that students who are pregnant or parenting are protected by allowing continued participation in classes and extracurricular activities, provide reasonable adjustments in the learning environment, authorize excused absences due to pregnancy or childbirth, and allow time to make up missed work. However, while some schools seek to support these students, other choose to make the school climate dynamics so toxic that pregnant students may choose to drop out of school during pregnancy or decide to not return. Many pregnant and parenting students reported that they had no other choice by to attend an alternative school to continue their education. ² These students reported that they failed to receive adequate instruction, and therefore felt disengaged from learning. Often times these alternative schools do not have the same variety of classes or offer advanced placement classes. Black and Latinx female and male students have experienced some of the highest rates of exclusionary discipline, leading to push out into alternative schools.

¹ U.S. Department of Education *Know Your Rights: Pregnant or Parenting? Title IX Protects You from Discrimination at School*.

² Clearing the Path: Creating School Success for Pregnant and Parenting Students and their children. Education Law Center. 2019
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³According to the Advancement Project, pushout to alternative schools brings these students closer to the school to prison pipeline. ⁴ In the National Women’s Law Center report, “Stopping School Pushout for: Girls Who Are Pregnant or Parenting,” more than 50% of female pregnant or parenting students were black and more than 60% were Latinx.⁵ Discrimination and push out interfering with a pregnant or parenting student’s authentic participation in school can lead to real threats of educational attainment and financial stability for generations⁶. SB0830 works towards establishing reporting requirements including reporting the number of students that are pregnant and parenting, along with their graduation rates, standardized test scores, grade promotion rates, and services/programs in place to support them. This data collection will not only shed light on the number of students enrolled in alternative schools, but also the educational success of these students when attending alternative schools.

SB0830 seeks to better understand the climate and support of students attending alternative schools in Maryland. Gaining a better understanding of what resources are provided at alternative schools allows for improvement to support all students regardless of the types of schools they attend. As such, it will allow more students across our state to thrive and realize their educational goals. For these reasons, **NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges a favorable committee report on SB0830.** Thank you for your time and consideration.

³ Monique W. Morris, African American Policy Forum, Race, Gender, and the School-to-Prison Pipeline: Expanding Our Discussion to Include Black Girls (2012).

⁴ Advancement Project. (2010) Test, Punish, and Push Out: How “Zero Tolerance” and High-Stakes Testing Funnel Youth Into the School-to-Prison Pipeline. Washington, DC.

⁵ Garcia, Kelli and Chaudhry, Neena. (2017). Stopping School Pushout for: Girls Who Are Pregnant or Parenting. National Women’s Law Center.

⁶ 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>