



**HB0914 - Education -- Home and Hospital Teaching Program for Students - Report**  
Presented to the Hon. Anne Kaiser and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee  
February 17, 2021 1:30 p.m.

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**POSITION: SUPPORT**

NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland urges Members of the House Ways and Means Committee to issue a **favorable report on HB0914 – Education -- Home and Hospital Teaching Program for Students**, sponsored by Delegate Harry Bhandari.

Our organization is an advocate for reproductive health, rights, and justice. 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. Our organization seeks to help identify and create effective systems of support to help pregnant and parenting students stay in school, remain on track to graduate, and work towards economic security.

In 2017, the Maryland General Assembly passed HB0616, which established excused absences for pregnant and parenting students for medical and legal reasons. HB0616 also clarified that although pregnancy is not an illness, it is a medical event that requires reasonable time off from school to address prenatal needs and postpartum recovery without being unfairly subjected to truancy allegations or school pushout. It is essential that pregnant, expectant, and parenting students should have access to resources to support their both educational and parenting goals. A Gates Foundation study found that approximately half of female dropouts reported that pregnancy or becoming a parent played a role in their decisions to leave school<sup>1</sup>. The same was true for almost one-third of male dropouts. These statistics can be attributed to “school pushout”; a phenomenon in which students feel so disenfranchised due to a lack of resources and support in their schools that they actually feel pressured to drop out<sup>2</sup>. Captured in our state’s vital statistics is the fact that 2,645 teenagers under the age of 19 gave birth in Maryland in 2018<sup>3</sup>. We can speculate that among these 2,645 youth are students in need of additional resources to continue pursuing their education while likely parenting for the first time – as well as their co-parents.

While we currently have no information about graduation rates for Maryland pregnant, expectant, and parenting students, we know from speaking with former and current students, school faculty and staff, and community advocates that the potential wanes without proper resources or support. As we attempt to address the lack of data collection on educational outcomes and how we can best address barriers to obtaining high school diplomas, we also need to explore reasonable access to home and hospital teaching programs for students enduring significant pregnancy complications, as well as for those with pregnancies resulting in premature births or Cesarean delivery (C-sections) requiring longer time away from mainstream classroom settings. Under Title IX, these students share the same rights to opportunities for a rigorous education as their non-parenting peers. For a successful transition back into their schools of origin, students with more

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<sup>1</sup> National Women’s Law Center: A Pregnancy Test for Schools Report (2012).

<sup>2</sup> Don’t Get Pushed Out. Know Your Rights! Retrieved from <https://www.mdsuspensionrep.org/know-your-rights>

<sup>3</sup> Power to Decide: The Campaign to End Unplanned Pregnancy (2018). Retrieved from <https://powertodecide.org/what-we-do/information/national-state-data/maryland>

complicated pregnancy experiences will be relying on effective instructors and solid case management if it is appropriate for them to participate in the home and hospital teaching program. A report on the current functioning of this program and recommendations for improvement of this program will help all Maryland students experiencing major medical events in their lives and bring them closer to realizing their educational goals.

Pregnant and parenting students often report having a renewed sense of commitment to their educational outcomes, knowing full well that high school diplomas will lead to better employment prospects in order to adequately care for the families they are forming. Under Title IX, these students deserve the support they need to achieve their educational goals. We must not leave them behind. For these reasons, NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland **urges a favorable committee report on bill HB0914**. Thank you for your time and consideration.