

January 27, 2026

The Honorable John Thune  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Thune and Minority Leader Schumer,

We, the undersigned organizations, represent a diverse group of advocates and experts dedicated to advancing civil rights protections and institutional resources for pregnant and parenting students. We write to share our opposition to the [Pregnant Students' Rights Act](#)—a thinly veiled anti-abortion law which would not address the key barriers to pregnant students' educational attainment, but would instead further shame and stigmatize people for their pregnancy outcomes.

**This bill that purports to “protect the rights of pregnant students” falls far short of the protections that are actually necessary for pregnant and parenting students and their children.**

More than 3 million undergraduate students in the United States are parents, which is nearly one in five.<sup>1</sup> Despite earning higher GPAs than non-parenting students,<sup>2</sup> parenting college students are less likely to graduate.<sup>3</sup> This is not due to personal failing, but rather a lack of institutional support and recognition of the unique barriers to college completion for parenting students.<sup>4</sup> Pregnant and parenting students often experience feeling disconnected from the larger education community and are not aware of who they can speak to when they experience discrimination because of their pregnancy or parenting status.<sup>5</sup>

Students who are pregnant and/or parents deserve to complete their education free from bias and harassment, in environments that support them on their educational journeys. Unfortunately, pregnant and parenting students are routinely stigmatized, discriminated against, and denied the resources, accommodations, and support they need to thrive in their educational institutions.<sup>6</sup> Many pregnant students risk their health or the health of their pregnancies, because they are unaware of their right to accommodations, including leaves of absence, lactation accommodations, academic adjustments—including virtual learning and extensions on completing assignments—financial aid eligibility, and child care. Ensuring that students are informed about their educational institution's policies that can further their academic achievement while also supporting their health and caregiving needs is an important step in addressing the systemic barriers that can keep pregnant and parenting students from graduating.

Unfortunately, the proposed bill would do little to mitigate these harms and instead risks further stigmatizing pregnant and parenting students. The proposed bill relies on anti-abortion language and seeks to limit students' reproductive healthcare decisions. This language is part of a political ploy that the anti-abortion movement hopes to use to further its case for a national abortion ban now that the Supreme Court has overturned the federal constitutional right to abortion care as established in *Roe v. Wade*. Furthermore, the bill language undermines existing legal protections

under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) for pregnant students experiencing a range of outcomes related to their pregnancies.

Our belief in personal autonomy and respect for every person's capacity to make their own decisions—including whether to continue their pregnancy or not—is at the core of our work to support pregnant and parenting students. This bill does not contain any meaningful supports<sup>7</sup> that would actually help pregnant and parenting students be able to remain enrolled and meet their educational goals.

Such supports are critically needed, and include:

- Explicit protections under Title IX
- Nondiscrimination protections at the state and local level
- Accessible and affordable child care, and increased funding for on-campus child care
- Access to early education and pre-kindergarten services
- Transportation access
- Support for basic needs, including food, housing, clothing, etc.
- Flexible school attendance policies
- Lactation accommodations
- Less stigma and shame around young parenthood
- Increased accountability measures for institutions who fail to protect pregnant and parenting students
- Federal funding to support campus Title IX offices' work to prevent and investigate discrimination against pregnant students
- Mandatory data collection on student parents to help institutions better target supports and meet the unique needs of this population

As mentioned above, pregnant and parenting students do face stigma and need adequate resources to combat discrimination. However, the Pregnant Students' Rights Act contains little more than a hollow directive for these students to file complaints with the Department of Education, which the Trump Administration has been systematically decimating since taking office, even promising to dismantle the agency.<sup>8</sup> A series of Executive Orders issued early in 2025 substantially impacted the Department's enforcement of civil rights laws, by prioritizing weaponizing these laws to advance discrimination instead of protecting students, including pregnant and parenting students.<sup>9</sup> Education Secretary Linda McMahon fired nearly half of Department staff—with the Office for Civil Rights (OCR), which is responsible for ensuring schools comply with federal civil rights laws, being particularly impacted.<sup>10</sup> And Secretary McMahon also closed most of OCR's twelve regional offices that have responsibility to investigate alleged violations of civil rights laws. Directing pregnant students to an institution that has been gutted by the current Administration is little more than lip service.

There is an alternate path forward. We applaud the bipartisan legislation put forward by your colleagues in the House of Representatives, Lucy McBath, Deborah Ross, and Don Bacon: the [Understanding Student Parent Outcomes Act of 2025](#). This bill would make a meaningful difference by allowing essential data collection on the barriers to college graduation for pregnant

and parenting students. Legislation like this is necessary to ensure that pregnant and parenting students can complete their education and that they and their families are protected.

Although pregnant and parenting students face many roadblocks, they can thrive when their educational institutions listen to them, support them, and prevent discrimination against them. While balancing their health, caregiving responsibilities,<sup>11</sup> and educational goals is challenging, these added responsibilities often renew students' dedication to their studies.<sup>12</sup> While the decision to parent and/or continue pregnancy is a personal one, the barriers that pregnant and parenting students face are not. This proposed bill would reinforce structural and institutional bias and scrutiny of the decisions students make regarding their personal lives.

We welcome the opportunity to have an open dialogue with the sponsors of the "Pregnant Students' Rights Act" and with any other members of Congress who are ready to be the champion that pregnant and parenting students in our nation need and deserve.

Sincerely,

A Better Me Learning  
Advocates for Youth  
AFT, AFL-CIO  
All\* In Action Fund  
Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools  
American Association of University Women (AAUW)  
American Atheists  
American Civil Liberties Union  
American Humanist Association  
Center for Reproductive Rights  
Charlotte's Web Thoughts  
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues  
End Rape On Campus  
Equal Rights Advocates  
Feminist Majority  
Gender Justice  
Girls for Gender Equity  
Guttmacher Institute  
Healthy Teen Network  
Ibis Reproductive Health  
Institute for Women's Policy Research  
Japanese American Citizens League  
Just Solutions  
Justice and Joy National Collaborative  
Know Your IX  
Legal Momentum, the Women's Legal Defense & Education Fund  
MANA, A National Latina Organization  
Men4Choice

MomsRising  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Education Association  
National Family Planning & Reproductive Health Association  
National Institute for Reproductive Health  
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice  
National Network of Abortion Funds  
National Organization for Women  
National Organization of API Ending Sexual Violence  
National Partnership for Women & Families  
National Women's Law Center Action Fund  
National Women's Political Caucus  
New America Higher Education Policy Program  
Physicians for Reproductive Health  
Planned Parenthood Federation of America  
Positive Women's Network-USA  
Power to Decide  
Public Counsel  
Public Justice  
Reproaction  
Reproductive Freedom for All  
Rocky Mountain Victim Law Center  
SIECUS: Sex Ed for Social Change  
Stop Sexual Assault in Schools  
Tahirih Justice Center  
The Advocacy Institute  
The Pregnant Scholar at WorkLife Law  
Transgender Law Center  
UltraViolet Action  
Union for Reform Judaism  
University Survivors Movement  
Women Employed  
Women of Reform Judaism  
Women's Law Project

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- <sup>1</sup> Theresa Anderson et al., SPARK Collaborative, *Who are Undergraduates with Dependent Children?* (Sept. 2024), <https://studentparentaction.org/assets/r-file/Who-Are-Undergraduates-with-Dependent-Children.pdf>.
- <sup>2</sup> Institute for Women's Policy and Research, *Parents in College by the Numbers* (April 11, 2019), <https://iwpr.org/parents-in-college-by-the-numbers/>
- <sup>3</sup> Renee Ryberg, Rachel Rosenberg, Jessica Warren, *Higher Education Can Support Parenting Students and Their Children with Accessible and Equitable Services*, Child Trends (Jan. 2021), <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/higher-education-support-parenting-students-and-their-children>
- <sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Barbara Gault and Lindsey Reichlin Cruse, *Access to Child Care Can Improve Student Parent Graduation Rates* (2017), Inst. for Women's Pol'y & Res. (May 2017), <https://iwpr.org/access-to-child-care-can-improve-student-parent-graduation-rates/>
- <sup>5</sup> Generation Hope, *National Student Parent Survey Results and Recommendations* (May 2020), <https://www.generationhope.org/student-parents-report-2020>
- <sup>6</sup> See, e.g., The Coalition for Pregnant and Parenting Students Advocacy, *Comment Regarding Proposed Title IX Regulations*, (Sept. 12, 2022), <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/PPS-advocates-comment-9.12.22.pdf>
- <sup>7</sup> The Urban Institute, in collaboration with a cross-sectoral Leadership Council, has developed a roadmap of opportunities to improve practice, policy, research, and investment to support pregnant and parenting students and their families. See <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/roadmap-change-support-pregnant-and-parenting-students>
- <sup>8</sup> Exec. Order No. 14242, 90 Fed. Reg. 13679 (2025), [www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/improving-education-outcomes-by-empowering-parents-states-and-communities](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/improving-education-outcomes-by-empowering-parents-states-and-communities).
- <sup>9</sup> Bayliss Fiddiman, *Dismantling the Department of Education Would be Disastrous for Educational Equity* (Feb. 14, 2025), [www.nwlc.org/dismantling-the-department-of-education-would-be-disastrous-for-educational-equity](https://www.nwlc.org/dismantling-the-department-of-education-would-be-disastrous-for-educational-equity).
- <sup>10</sup> Dep't of Educ., U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force (Mar. 11, 2025), [www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-in-force](https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-initiates-reduction-in-force); Naaz Modan, K-12 Dive, *Half of OCR Eliminated After Trump Education Department Layoffs* (Mar. 12, 2025), [www.k12dive.com/news/half-of-ocr-fired-after-trump-education-department-layoffs/742374](https://www.k12dive.com/news/half-of-ocr-fired-after-trump-education-department-layoffs/742374).
- <sup>11</sup> See Generation Hope, *The Child Care Barrier: The Impacts of Inaccessible and Costly Child Care for Student Parents* (2023), <https://www.generationhope.org/child-care-report-2023-download>
- <sup>12</sup> Nat'l Women's Law Ctr., *Let Her Learn: Stopping Pushout For Girls Who are Pregnant or Parenting*, 1, (2017) <https://nwlc.org/resources/stopping-school-pushout-for-girls-who-are-pregnant-or-parenting/>