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H.R. 5894 – Pregnant and Parenting Students Access to Education Act

Background

- For the first time in over a decade, teen pregnancy rates in the U.S. have increased. Every year, there are approximately 750,000 teen pregnancies and 400,000 teen births. Nearly 3 in 10 girls in the U.S. get pregnant at least once before age 20.
- Pregnancy and parenting responsibilities significantly increase a student's risk of dropping out of school: only half of teen mothers have a high school diploma compared to 89 percent of their childless peers.
- In a nationwide survey of dropout youth, close to half of all female dropouts and one-third of male dropouts said that becoming a parent played a role in their decision to leave school.
- The dropout crisis experienced by this group of students has severe short- and long-term consequences for the economic success and well-being of their families and communities, as well as our nation. For example, the children of dropouts are more likely to drop out of school themselves.
- This alarming trend stems from the many barriers that pregnant and parenting teens face in enrolling, attending, and succeeding in school, such as discrimination, the challenge of juggling schoolwork with parenting responsibilities, and lack of access to affordable, quality child care, transportation, and other critical services.

What the Pregnant and Parenting Students Access to Education Act does:

There are ways to break this vicious cycle and engage and re-engage pregnant and parenting students. Providing supports for pregnant and parenting students can go a long way toward improving high school graduation rates, especially because pregnant and parenting students often are highly motivated. In the same nationwide survey of dropout youth, those who left school to care for a family member or because they became a parent were more likely than any other group of dropouts to say they would have worked harder if their schools had demanded more of them and provided the necessary supports.

- Provides the necessary resources to states and school districts to ensure that pregnant and parenting students have equal access to educational opportunity. Specifically, the legislation:
- Enables states to create a state plan for pregnant and parenting students, provide professional development and technical assistance to school districts, coordinate services with other state agencies, and disseminate information, among other activities.
- Establishes a state coordinator and school district liaisons for the education of pregnant and parenting students.
- Requires school district grantees to provide academic support services for pregnant and parenting students; assist students in gaining access to affordable child care, early childhood education, and transportation services; engage in student outreach, recruitment and retention; provide professional development for school personnel; and revise school policies and practices to remove barriers and encourage pregnant and parenting students to continue their education.
- Allows districts to provide parenting and life skills classes; case management services; pregnancy prevention interventions; referrals to primary health care, family planning, mental health,

substance abuse, housing assistance, legal aid, mentoring, or other supportive services needed by the student; as well as to address school climate issues, including illegal discrimination against and stigmatization of pregnant and parenting students.

- Collects and reports data on pregnant and parenting students annually, including educational outcomes, and requires a rigorous evaluation of the program.

Supporting Organizations

- American Association of University Women
- California Women's Law Center
- Colorado Youth Matters
- Equal Rights Advocates
- Healthy Teen Network
- Minnesota Organization on Adolescent Pregnancy, Prevention and Parenting
- National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy
- National Council of La Raza
- National Crittenton Foundation
- National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
- National Network for Youth
- National Women's Law Center

Congressional Co-sponsors

- Shelley Berkley (NV-1)
- Lois Capps (CA-23)
- Yvette Clarke (NY-11)
- John Conyers (MI-14)
- Raúl Grijalva (AZ-7)
- Rubén Hinojosa (TX-15)
- Eddie Bernice Johnson (TX-30)
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- Eleanor Holmes Norton (DC)
- Laura Richardson (CA-37)
- Lucille Roybal-Allard (CA-34)
- Loretta Sanchez (CA-47)
- Janice Schakowsky (IL-09)
- Robert "Bobby" Scott (VA-03)
- Lynne Woolsey (CA-06)

Further Reading

National Women's Law Center and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund:

Listening to Latinas: Barriers to High School Graduation

<http://www.nwlc.org/details.cfm?id=3631§ion=education>

National Women's Law Center: *Access to Education for Pregnant and Parenting Students*

<http://www.nwlc.org/details.cfm?id=3625§ion=education>