



**House
Legislative
Analysis
Section**

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**PREGNANT AND PARENTING
STUDENT SERVICES**

**House Bill 4564 with committee
amendment
First Analysis (5-8-01)**

**Sponsor: Rep. Patricia Lockwood
Committee: Family and Children's
Services**

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

There are many public and private agencies and organizations available to help women with an unexpected pregnancy obtain services such as counseling, affordable prenatal care and delivery services, maternity clothes and baby items, and social services like Medicaid, food stamps, and child care subsidies. Identifying and locating those resources can be a daunting task, as most communities do not have a central office to distribute such information. If a woman is also a college student, her access to off-campus resource centers may be restricted by distance, availability of public transportation, and her class and work schedules. In addition, an unexpectedly pregnant college student faces issues unique to her situation; for example, a sudden need to find a different place to live and, depending on the due date or complications of pregnancy, conflicts with completing a semester of study.

Though it has been estimated that approximately ten percent of female college students will become pregnant during their time in college, few colleges or universities have a resource center that offers information on available college, state, and local services in one easily accessible place. Students may have to go to one office to find housing information, another for information on child care, and so on. A pregnant student may be unaware of the existence of certain services, such as low-cost or free birthing and parenting classes. Without necessary supports, many students feel the only option is to drop out of college.

However, keeping a pregnant student in college is important for several reasons. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), women who complete a bachelor's degree will earn, on average, almost \$14,000 more a year than women with a high school education. The NCES estimates that approximately 308,000 female Michigan residents currently attend college. As a woman's earning ability increases, so does her ability to

provide for herself and her children and contribute to the economy.

A few colleges and universities have central resource offices that distribute pertinent information to pregnant or parenting students. For example, the GU Pregnancy Services office at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. coordinates a comprehensive program for pregnant students that includes information on subjects such as medical care, housing options, financial assistance, adoption resources, academic assistance, support groups for single mothers, and access to a computerized database clearinghouse for infant furniture and clothes. A representative of the GU Pregnancy Services office reported that in the approximately 10-year history of the office, all of the students who used the office's information resources went on to graduate from college.

Many believe that if Michigan colleges and universities offered a one-stop resource center to disseminate information relating to pregnancy and parenting, more students facing unexpected pregnancies could identify and use services that would enable them to complete their degrees. The House-passed version of the fiscal year 2001-2002 budget bill for the Department of Community Health contains boilerplate language allocating \$200,000 of the special projects appropriation to be used for pilot grants to Michigan colleges and universities to develop "a network of resources and support services for students enrolled in the participating institution of higher education who are in need of pregnancy and parenting services." Separate legislation has been introduced to create a Pregnant and Parenting Student Services Fund and to establish guidelines for the development of a college or university Pregnant and Parenting Student Services Office.

House Bill 4564 (5-8-01)

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The bill would create a new act to create a Pregnant and Parenting Student Services Project, to provide grants to colleges and universities for establishing an office to assist students who are pregnant or who have children locate service providers.

Under the bill, the Department of Community Health would administer the program and award grants to colleges and universities. In the first year of the program, no more than four grants could be awarded, and these would be for pilot programs. To receive a grant, an institution would have to establish and operate a Pregnant and Parenting Student Services Office, which would have to do the following:

- be located on the campus of the institution;
- annually assess the institution's performance in meeting the needs of pregnant and parenting students on campus in the categories of comprehensive health care, family housing, child care, flexible or alternative academic scheduling, and education concerning responsible parenting for mothers and fathers;
- identify service providers qualified to meet those needs, both on campus and within the local community, and establish programs with qualified providers selected to meet those needs;
- assist students in locating and obtaining services to meet those needs;
- if appropriate, provide referrals to adoption agencies or for pregnancy prevention (the bill would prohibit referrals for abortion services); and,
- report annually to the department, itemizing expenditures and reviewing and evaluating the performance of the office.

In addition, the department would have to identify specific performance criteria and standards for offices to use in preparing the required annual reports.

Grants would be made from the Pregnant and Parenting Student Services Fund, which would be created under the bill. The fund would be established in the state treasury and administered by the state treasurer, who would direct its investments and make grants to colleges and universities as directed by the Department of Community Health. The fund would consist of appropriations; money allocated, donated,

or paid to the fund from any source; and interest and earnings on fund investments. Money in the fund would not lapse to the general fund at the close of a fiscal year. The fund could be appropriated for grants under the bill and to pay the administrative costs of the Department of Community Health in implementing the bill.

The Department of Community Health could promulgate rules to implement and administer the bill.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

According to the House Fiscal Agency, the grant program created by the bill would require an increase of appropriated state funds to function. As of this date, separate legislation to establish the DCH budget for fiscal year 2001-2002 includes a \$200,000 general fund appropriation for pilot grants and administration of this program (Section 1115 of House Bill 4254 as passed by the House). However, the appropriation is not yet enacted. (5-7-01)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

Facing an unexpected pregnancy is difficult under the best of circumstances, but it may be even more difficult for women who are also attending college. Few pregnant or parenting students can afford tuition, housing, and child care without financial assistance. Finding quality child care is especially a challenge, since a student's class and work schedule does not fit into a 9:00 to 5:00 time frame. Some students may find that their class load needs be adjusted, or that they may have to drop out mid-semester (which can have financial aid implications). Almost always, a student's living situation must be changed, as babies cannot be brought into dormitories or many student apartments. In short, a woman with an unexpected pregnancy faces many challenges and is, therefore, in need of information in order to make decisions appropriate to her situation.

Unfortunately, information on available resources is not always easy for a pregnant or parenting student to find. At most colleges and universities, information on state and community resources may be located in different offices across campus, or not available at all. A Michigan State University student recently quoted in the campus newspaper said of her attempt to get referral information at the student health

center, “They handed me a folder with information on planned motherhood, child care and a sheet with phone numbers for abortion clinics – that’s as far as their referral process goes.” (*The State News*, 4-26-01)

A pregnant student who cannot find available support services may believe that her choices are limited and so may drop out of school. Georgetown University has an office that coordinates a comprehensive program to provide information to pregnant students that is similar to the program proposed in House Bill 4564. According to staff, the office has a 100 percent success rate in bringing women with unexpected pregnancies to graduation. The office does not provide direct services, but a licensed health professional working in the office assesses the student’s changing needs throughout the course of the pregnancy via one-on-one sessions and makes the appropriate referrals. Students are not steered toward a particular course of action, but the information on available support services enables them to make informed choices that fit their unique circumstances. The 100 percent graduation rate for women who have used the office’s resources speaks volumes as to the importance of such an office. Michigan colleges and universities should be encouraged to develop similar programs.

For:

House Bill 4564 would establish guidelines for the development of offices for pregnant and parenting students at Michigan colleges, universities, and community colleges. The bill would allow for the appropriation of general fund money to fund pilot projects for qualifying programs, and would also allow the Department of Community Health to seek out other sources of revenue, such as public and private grants. Though not specifically mentioned in the bill, the bill would not prohibit colleges and universities from also seeking out donations, gifts, or grants to fund such a project. Private and public colleges, universities, community colleges, and junior colleges could apply for a grant to fund a program. Initially, the bill would limit funding to four grants for pilot programs, and the DCH budget bill (as passed by the House) carries a modest \$200,000 appropriation to be divided among the four qualifying colleges and the department for administrative expenses.

The cost to maintain an office to disseminate information to pregnant and parenting students per college could be fairly low (some estimates put the cost at approximately \$30,000 to \$50,000 per college depending on the size of the student population),

especially in comparison to the benefits of enabling thousands of women a year to stay in college. A woman’s earning potential is considerably less without a college degree (about \$14,000 a year lower). If over 300,000 Michigan women attend college, and approximately 10 percent become pregnant each year, it is easy to see why the bill is so important. Each woman who drops out of college will most likely earn less money annually, pay less taxes, contribute less money through expenditures to the state’s economy, and may even be in need of state social welfare programs such as public assistance, Medicaid, MICHild, and Family Independence Agency child care subsidies for a longer period of time.

However, merely concentrating support service and resource information under one roof appears to have a significant impact on a woman’s ability to stay in school. Such programs, therefore, should be strongly encouraged and financially supported.

For:

The bill is proactive is reaching out to students who are parenting children while pursuing degrees. A strong point of the bill is that it would also include services directed at fathers. Programs seeking a grant under the bill would have to include information regarding educational programs on responsible parenting for both mothers and fathers. It is not uncommon to have a student household headed by a single father. And, for those couples in which both parents are attending school part or full time, fathers as well as mothers may be in need of academic counseling, financial aid counseling, help with juggling work and school schedules, and so forth. As research is showing a relation between the contribution of an active father and the overall success of a child, the needs of a student father should also be addressed.

For:

The bill would encourage partnerships between Pregnant and Parenting Student Services Offices and community resource services. For example, an office of Pregnant and Parenting Student Services could assist in obtaining reduced prices for parenting classes, referrals for health care providers who would reduce their fees for delivery services, transportation to appointments, and so on. This is a win-win situation for all because identifying needed services, and improving students’ access to these services, make for healthier babies and healthier families.

Against:

The bill bans referral for abortion, yet would make referrals for many other services. If the intent is to provide a program whereby a student with an unexpected pregnancy can obtain information related to pregnancy and parenting issues under one roof, then information on abortion should also be included. It is clear that these offices would not be counseling students to choose a particular path to follow, but merely providing information so that a student can make an informed choice. Even the federal family planning program requires projects receiving grant money to provide information and counseling regarding pregnancy termination along with information on prenatal care and delivery and infant care, foster care, or adoption. The program guidelines also require such information to be neutral factual information and that if counseling is given on the above options, that it be nondirective. Also, a referral upon request must be given. If the Department of Community Health or any college or university received grant money subject to these guidelines, the bill's ban on abortion referrals could prevent those funds from being used to fund Pregnant and Parenting Student Services offices.

Response:

The focus of the bill is to provide students with unexpected pregnancies, and students with parenting needs, information about supports and programs that is difficult to find. If a student wishes to terminate a pregnancy, information about clinics that offer abortions is easy to find in the yellow pages. What isn't so easy to find are such things as: which childbirth and parenting programs offer a discount to college students; which churches or community organizations offer free maternity clothes and baby items; which apartments are safe, affordable, and conducive to raising young children; and so on.

POSITIONS:

Right to Life of Michigan supports the bill. (5-1-01)

The Michigan Catholic Conference supports the bill. (5-1-01)

Dads of Michigan and Dads of Michigan PAC support the bill. (4-30-01)

Planned Parenthood Affiliates of Michigan supports the concept of the Pregnant and Parenting Student Services Office, but is opposed to the language in Section 5(e) that would bar abortion referrals. (5-1-01)

The National Organization for Women/Michigan Chapter generally supports the bill but has concerns regarding the ban on abortion referrals. (5-1-01)

The American Civil Liberties Union (ALCU) generally supports the bill but is concerned about the ban on abortion referrals. (5-1-01)

The Department of Community Health has not taken a formal position on the bill, but has concerns about funding. (4-30-01)

Analyst: S. Stutzky

■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.