

In consultation with our policy analyst, Sharon Toborg, Vermont Right to Life believes that S.37 is unconstitutionally biased in favor of abortion by requiring UVM and the Vermont State Colleges to develop an “abortion services readiness plan,” rather than an “abortion and pregnancy services readiness plan.”

Our state has just been through the process to amend our constitution, to protect not only abortion, but also the right to carry a pregnancy to term. I hope this committee will take steps to make sure that those who wish to parent or make an adoption plan are provided as much support as those students seeking abortion.

The Vermont Right to Life Committee has concerns around Section 2502 requiring college institutions to develop a readiness plan for providing gender-affirming health care and medication abortion for their students, but does not require a readiness plan for pregnant or parenting students.

We encourage the Senate Health and Welfare Committee to use the opportunity presented by S37 to include in Section 2502 a provision that UVM and the Vermont State Colleges develop a similarly comprehensive plan to support a student who has decided to continue a pregnancy, or to continue to parent a child (or children) or to make an adoption plan while trying to complete their degree.

In 2022, nearly 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of abortions (392 out of 1227 abortions) performed in Vermont involved those between the ages of 18 and 24.

The University of Vermont has made some provisions under the requirements of Title IX, (which prevents discrimination against pregnant and parenting students) but much more can and could be done at both UVM and the Vermont State Colleges.

For example, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, has an office for student parents which can be found online at the link provided in my written testimony. Their services include child care subsidies and Family Grants for “non-child care related, unexpected expenses, that would negatively impact academic progress.”

The website opens with “Welcome Student Parents - *Are you a pregnant or parenting student? Student Parent Programs is here for you!*”

<https://www.umass.edu/titleix/resoures/parenting>

<https://www.umass.edu/ofr/>

Similarly, under the Insurance Coverage section of S 37, if the state is going to eliminate copays and coinsurance for abortion, copays for prenatal care and childbirth should be eliminated as well.

In 2022, a federal bill was proposed entitled the Pregnant Students Rights Act and of the bill provisions would:

- Amend the *Higher Education Act* to ensure college students know their protections and rights other than abortion services through more thorough information dissemination activities, such as placing the resources on the school's website, in student handbooks and emails, or shared during student orientations.
- Reinforce current law requiring schools to adopt and publish procedures for students to file complaints of discrimination related to their sex, pregnancy, or parental status by imploring colleges to make these existing protections and accommodations more widely known.
- Require every higher education institution to complete and submit an annual survey of their students to gather information about how pregnant students used their campus resources and Title IX violations.

Thank you for your time.