

ASSEMBLY HIGHER EDUCATION COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 5493

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: OCTOBER 5, 2026

The Assembly Higher Education Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 5493.

This bill, entitled the "Student-Parent Protection Act," ensures equal rights and opportunities for parenting students enrolled in institutions of higher education.

Under current law, an institution of higher education offering associate, baccalaureate, or graduate degree programs is:

- prohibited from requiring a student to take a leave of absence, withdraw from an associate, baccalaureate, or graduate program, or limit associate, baccalaureate, or graduate studies solely due to pregnancy or pregnancy-related issues;
- required to provide reasonable accommodations to a pregnant student to enable the student to complete coursework and research; and
- required to develop and adopt a written policy for students on pregnancy discrimination and procedures for addressing pregnancy discrimination complaints under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 or under State law.

Current law further provides that an enrolled student in good academic standing who chooses to take a leave of absence because the student is pregnant or has recently given birth is to return to the associate, baccalaureate, or graduate program in good academic standing following a leave period consistent with the policies of the institution of higher education or of up to one academic year, whichever period is longer. If there is a medical reason for a longer absence, the student's standing in the associate, baccalaureate, or graduate program is required to be maintained during that period of absence.

This bill expands the protections provided under current law for pregnant students to parenting students. Under the bill, a parenting student is defined as a student enrolled in an institution of higher education who is the parent or legal guardian of a child under 18 years of age. The bill also requires the institution's discrimination policy to be posted at a publicly available location on its Internet website. The bill clarifies that a student is not required to reapply for admission at the institution following a leave period.