

# AB 809 (Santiago)

## Title IX Protections for Pregnant and Parenting College Students

### Bill Summary

This bill would require public postsecondary institutions to post on each campus' website, and to provide through on-campus health centers, notification of protections for pregnant and parenting students under Title IX. This bill also encourages each campus' child development program to prioritize children of single, low-income students.

### Existing Law

Federal law establishes Title IX, which prevents discrimination in education based on sex, including pregnancy and parental status. Any public postsecondary educational institution that receives federal funds must adhere to Title IX requirements, therefore these regulations apply to the California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California (20 U.S. Code § 1681).

State law further expands on Title IX by requiring all public colleges and universities to clearly post on their website the name and contact for that institution's Title IX coordinator, instructions on how to file a complaint under Title IX, etc. (Education Code § 221.5-231.5).

### Background

Title IX was established to ensure that all students, regardless of gender or sex, are afforded equal educational opportunities. However, despite Title IX protections, pregnant and parenting students still face difficult hurdles when obtaining a college degree. According to the National Women's Law Center, only about 50 percent of teen mothers will earn a high school diploma or GED by age 22.<sup>1</sup> Even less of these women go on to attend a college or university because of the overwhelming demands of parenthood.

Once in college, many pregnant or single parents are unaware of their protections under Title IX as only 39.4% of California universities explicitly include pregnancy and parenting rights in their published Title IX information.<sup>2</sup> Some of the Title IX rights include having pregnancy-related absences excused by instructors and providing pregnant students with the same special services provided to students with temporary medical conditions.

Another challenge facing pregnant and single parents in college is finding affordable child care that fits within their school schedule. Nearly half of single parent students work full-time while attending college or university. On-campus child care programs can help ease some of this burden, but, while 97% of universities in California offer child care, space is often limited and children can be waitlisted for months. This leaves single parents with the struggle of securing alternative child care while attending school which is costly and can disrupt their education. For these reasons, having flexible child care is crucial to educational success.

### Need for AB 809

Many college students are unaware of their Title IX protections, especially pregnant and parenting students, as many postsecondary educational institutions do not post this information clearly online for students to easily find. Additionally, it can be extremely difficult for single parents to secure a spot for their child in on-campus childcare programs.

By clearly posting Title IX protections for pregnant and parenting students to their websites, colleges and universities will provide students with information that can help them overcome challenges that otherwise may have caused them to leave college.

<sup>1</sup> National Women's Law Center. 2017. "Stopping School Pushout for: Girls Who Are Pregnant or Parenting."

<sup>2</sup> Foster, M. Serrin and Kellan Monroe. 2018. "Report on Resources and Support for Pregnant and Parenting Students at Highest Risk of Dropping Out Attending California State Colleges and Universities."

In addition, by encouraging on-campus childcare centers to prioritize the enrollment of children of low-income single parents, campuses can alleviate one of the biggest challenges faced by single parents, which is securing affordable and flexible childcare.

To address these problems, AB 809 will:

- Require all public colleges and universities in California to post Title IX protections for pregnant and parenting students to their website;
- Require each campus to distribute this information at on-campus health centers;
- Encourage on-campus childcare programs to prioritize children of low-income single parents.

It is imperative that colleges and universities in California make every effort to assist these students in completing their education. AB 809 is a modest, yet effective, step toward this goal.

### **Support**

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None on file.

### **Opposition**

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None on file.

### **For More Information**

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Stephanie Gerstle  
Assembly Member Miguel Santiago  
916.319.2053 | [Stephanie.Gerstle@asm.ca.gov](mailto:Stephanie.Gerstle@asm.ca.gov)