

INTERIM STUDY PROPOSAL 2025-084

REQUESTING THAT THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION STUDY AND
DEVELOP A STATEWIDE PROGRAM TO REDUCE DROPOUT RATES AMONG
PREGNANT AND PARENTING STUDENTS IN ARKANSAS.

WHEREAS, Arkansas has the second highest teen birth rate in the United States, with twenty-three and eight tenths (23.8) births per one thousand (1,000) females between the ages of fifteen (15) and nineteen (19) compared to the national average of thirteen and one tenth (13.1); and

WHEREAS, teen pregnancy significantly increases the likelihood of students dropping out of high school, with national research showing that only approximately fifty percent (50%) of teen mothers receive a high school diploma by age twenty-two (22); and

WHEREAS, Arkansas students who are pregnant or parenting often face barriers including without limitation lack of access to affordable childcare, transportation challenges, chronic absenteeism, stigma, and insufficient academic and social-emotional support; and

WHEREAS, dropout rates among pregnant and parenting students contribute to generational poverty, decreased earning potential, and poorer long-term health and educational outcomes for both the mother and child; and

WHEREAS, schools and school districts in Arkansas have varying levels of support for these students, leading to inequities in access to services and educational opportunities,

NOW THEREFORE,

BE IT PROPOSED BY THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION OF THE NINETY-FIFTH
GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

THAT the House Committee on Education conduct a study to:

(1) Assess the current scope of the problem to:

(A) Compile and analyze data on dropout and chronic

absenteeism rates among pregnant and parenting students in Arkansas;

(B) Identify demographic, geographic, and socioeconomic trends associated with the absenteeism rates among pregnant and parenting students in Arkansas; and

(C) Survey school districts on current policies, support programs, and gaps in services for pregnant and parenting students;

(2) Identify barriers to school completion for pregnant and parenting students, including without limitation:

(A) Lack of access to affordable or onsite childcare;

(B) Inflexible attendance or course scheduling policies;

(C) Limited transportation options;

(D) Insufficient wraparound supports, including academic, mental health, and health care; and

(E) Social stigma and lack of understanding from peers or school staff;

(3) Research best practices from other states and school systems, including without limitation:

(A) Onsite childcare programs in schools;

(B) Alternative scheduling or virtual coursework options for students balancing childcare responsibilities;

(C) Case management and mentoring programs for pregnant and parenting students;

(D) Partnerships with local health providers, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) offices, and community-based organizations; and

(E) State level grant programs or incentive funding for schools serving pregnant and parenting students;

(4) Develop a comprehensive program model for Arkansas that could include:

(A) Onsite childcare through pilot programs at selected high schools to provide accessible childcare during school hours;

(B) Flexible learning models through expanded virtual or hybrid course offerings to allow students to balance school and parenting;

(C) Transportation assistance through vouchers or coordinated transportation options for both student and child;

(D) Wraparound services through school-based access to

caseworkers, social services, and mental health support;

(E) Mentorship programs through peer or adult mentors who have successfully navigated parenting while completing school; and

(F) Policy recommendations to include guidance for school districts on attendance flexibility, credit recovery, and supportive discipline practices; and

(5) Estimate cost and funding sources for a statewide implementation plan, including without limitation possible federal, state, and philanthropic funding opportunities.

BE IT FURTHER PROPOSED THAT the findings of this study be compiled into a final report to the House Committee on Education, with specific recommendations for legislation or program funding to be considered during the next Regular Session of the General Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,

Representative Lincoln Barnett

District 63

Prepared by: CRH/CRH

