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Introduced by Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago

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EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Constitution, Article XIV, Section 1, provides:

Section 1. The State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.

Despite the importance of education, not everyone is fortunate enough to enroll in a school of higher learning, nor complete a degree program. Health and population statistics show that many students become mothers while still in their teens or early adulthood. In 2002, a study conducted by the Young Adult Fertility Study of the University of the Philippines disclosed that:

- 1 of 3 or **33%** of young women aged 20 to 24 have already given birth to their first child before reaching their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday;
- Only 19% of the youth who are sexually active use contraception.

Likewise, the Population Commission in 2004 found that:

- 10% of all births in the Philippines occur to teenage mothers aged 15 to 19;
- 4 out of 10 abortion complications treated in hospitals occur among young girls.

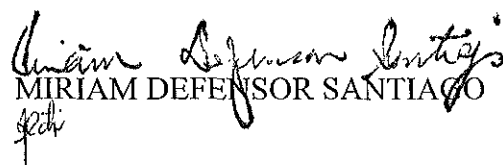
Childbearing women must overcome physical, financial, and emotional trials, which ordinary students do not experience. Although raising a child must not be the young mother's burden alone, some young fathers refuse to assume the responsibility for their unborn child, leaving the unwed mother to grapple with the difficulties of single parenthood. Thus, some of them are forced to drop out of school temporarily or even

permanently. Should this pregnant student quit school, she will be faced with even more difficult challenges: rearing a child by herself and finding a decent job. Fear of these consequences is the primary reason for resorting to abortion.

Those students who do continue with their pregnancy and schooling must overcome the challenges of first time motherhood. The state has a stake in protecting the welfare, health, and safety of this young mother and her child. The Constitution itself, declares that it is a policy of the state to equally protect the life of the mother and the life of the unborn from conception. Hence, the state must provide adequate support to mothers, during and immediately after their pregnancy, for these are the times when they are most vulnerable.

This bill<sup>1</sup> seeks to establish a pilot program to provide grants to encourage eligible institutions of higher education to establish and operate pregnant and parenting student services offices for pregnant students, parenting students, and prospective parenting students who are anticipating a birth. The program envisions a young mother's academic community to be supportive of her condition rather than penalize her for her pregnancy. The state must institutionalize a means by which the right of such young women to education can be fulfilled.

Indeed, an educated citizenry creates a formidable resource for nation-building; the physical, intellectual and emotional well-being of this resource must be protected so as to ensure our country's genuine development.

  
MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO  
Defensor

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<sup>1</sup> This bill was originally filed by the Senator during the 13<sup>th</sup> Congress

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1 AN ACT  
2 TO ESTABLISH A PILOT PROGRAM TO PROVIDE GRANTS ENCOURAGING  
3 INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION TO ESTABLISH AND OPERATE  
4 PREGNANT AND PARENTING STUDENT SERVICES OFFICES

5 *Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the Philippines in*  
6 *Congress assembled:*

7 SECTION 1. *Short Title.* - This Act shall be known as the "Pregnant and  
8 Parenting Student Services Act of 2007".

9 SECTION 2. *Definition of Terms.* - For purposes of this Act:

10 (A) "Eligible Higher Education Institution" refers to a public higher education  
11 institution that has established and operates, or agrees to establish and operate upon the  
12 receipt of a grant under this Act, a pregnant and parenting student services office  
13 described in Section 5.

14 (B) "Parent" refers to a parent or legal guardian of a minor.

15 (C) "Secretary" refers to the Secretary of the Department of Education.

16 SECTION. 3. *Pregnant and Parenting Student Services Pilot Program.* - The  
17 Secretary shall establish a pilot program to award grants to eligible institutions of higher  
18 education to enable eligible institutions of higher education to establish or maintain, and  
19 operate pregnant and parenting student services offices in accordance with Section 5.

20 SECTION. 4. *Application; Number of Grants* -

1 (A) Application - An eligible institution of higher education that desires to receive  
2 a grant under this Act shall submit an application to the Secretary at such time, in such  
3 manner, and containing such information as the Secretary may require.

4 (B) Requests for Additional Information - The Secretary may require an eligible  
5 institution submitting an application under subsection (A) to provide additional  
6 information if the Secretary determines that such information is necessary to process the  
7 application.

8 (C) Number of Grants - The Secretary shall award grants under this Act to not  
9 more than 200 eligible institutions of higher education, situated in the various regions,  
10 commensurate to the distribution of institutions per region.

11 SECTION 5. *Use of Funds.* -

12 (A) In General- An eligible institution of higher education which receives a grant  
13 under this Act shall use grant funds to establish or maintain and operate a pregnant and  
14 parenting student services office, located in the campus of the eligible institution, which  
15 carries out the following programs and activities:

16 (1) Hosts an initial pregnancy and parenting resource forum--

17 (a) to assess available pregnancy and parenting resources located on  
18 the campus or within the local community; and

19 (b) to set goals for-

20 (i) improved services for pregnant, parenting, and prospective  
21 parenting students; and

22 (ii) improved access to such services.

23 (2) Annually assesses the performance of the' eligible institution and the  
24 office in meeting the following needs of students enrolled in the eligible  
25 institution who are pregnant or are parents:

26 (a) Student health care that includes maternity coverage and makes  
27 available coverage for additional family members;

1 (b) Family housing;

2 (c) Child care;

3 (d) Flexible or alternative academic scheduling, such as  
4 telecommuting programs;

5 (e) Education concerning responsible parenting for mothers and  
6 fathers, and education supporting healthy marriages;

7 (f) Resources for pregnant women and children, such as maternity and  
8 baby clothing, baby food (including formula), and baby furniture;

9 (g) Post-partum counseling and support groups.

10 (3) Identifies public aid private service providers, located on the campus  
11 of the eligible institution or within the local community, that are qualified to meet  
12 the needs described in paragraph (2), and establishes programs with qualified  
13 providers to meet such needs.

14 (4) Assists pregnant and parenting students in locating and obtaining  
15 services that meet the needs described in paragraph (2).

16 (5) If appropriate, provides referrals for prenatal care and delivery, infant  
17 or foster care, or adoption, to a student who requests such information. An office  
18 shall make such referrals only to service providers that primarily serve the  
19 following types of individuals:

20 (a) Parents.

21 (b) Prospective parents awaiting adoption.

22 (c) Women who are pregnant and plan on parenting or placing the  
23 child for adoption.

24 (d) Parenting or prospective parenting couples who are married or who  
25 plan on marrying in order to provide a supportive environment for each  
26 other and their child.

27 (B) Expanded Services- In carrying out the programs and activities described in  
28 subsection (A), an eligible institution of higher education receiving a grant under this Act

1 may choose to provide access to such programs and activities to a pregnant or parenting  
2 employee of the eligible institution.

3 SECTION. 6. *Reporting.*

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5 (A) Annual Report by Institutions-

6 (1) In General - For each fiscal year that an eligible institution of higher  
7 education receives a grant under this Act, the eligible institution shall prepare and  
8 submit to the Secretary, by the date determined by the Secretary, a report that--

9 (a) itemizes the pregnant and parenting student services office's  
10 expenditures for the fiscal year;

11 (b) contains a review and evaluation of the performance of the office  
12 in fulfilling the requirements of this Act, using the specific performance  
13 criteria or standards established under paragraph (2); and

14 (c) describes the achievement of the office in meeting the needs listed  
15 in section 5(A)(2) of the students served by the eligible institution, and the  
16 frequency of use of the office by such students.

17 (2) Performance Criteria - Not later than 180 days before the date the  
18 annual report described in paragraph (1) is submitted, the Secretary--

19 (a) shall identify the specific performance criteria or standards which  
20 shall be used to prepare the report; and

21 (b) may establish the form or format of the report.

22 (3) Additional Information - After reviewing an annual report of an  
23 eligible institution of higher education, the Secretary may require that the eligible  
24 institution provide additional information if the Secretary determines that such  
25 additional information is necessary to evaluate the pilot program.

26 (B) Report by Secretary - The Secretary shall annually prepare and submit a  
27 report on the findings of the pilot program under this Act, including the number of  
28 eligible institutions of higher education that were awarded grants and the number of  
29 students served by each pregnant and parenting services office receiving funds under this

1 Act, to the appropriate committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

2 SECTION. 7. *Appropriations.* - To carry out the provisions of this Act, such  
3 amount as may be necessary is hereby authorized from the National Treasury. Thereafter,  
4 the amount necessary for the continuous operation of *Pregnant and Parenting Student*  
5 *Services Pilot Program* shall be included in the annual appropriations of the Department  
6 of Education.

7 SECTION 8. *Separability Clause.* - If any provision or part thereof, is held invalid  
8 or unconstitutional, the remainder of the law 'of the provision not otherwise affected shall  
9 remain valid and subsisting.

10 SECTION 9. *Repealing Clause.* - Any law, presidential decree or issuance,  
11 executive order, letter of instruction, administrative order, rule or regulation contrary to,  
12 or inconsistent with, the provisions of this Act is hereby repealed, modified or amended  
13 accordingly.

14 SECTION 10. *Effectivity Clause.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days  
15 after its publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

16 Approved,