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March 30, 2026

The Honorable Mike Fong, Chair
Assembly Higher Education Committee
1021 O Street, Suite 5650
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 1784 (Pellerin) Postsecondary education: nondiscrimination: pregnancy or pregnancy-related issues.

Dear Chair Fong and Honorable Members of the Assembly Education Committee,

The California Catholic Conference **SUPPORTS AB 1784 (Pellerin)** as introduced on 2/9/26. This bill would codify the Title IX rights of all college student parents, designate a point person on campus to assist student parents with accommodations, and share information about these rights as a norm during orientation.

20% of college students in California are parents. Student parents are often older, financially independent, highly motivated, earn better grades than their dependent peers, and 72% are students of color. It is in the state's best interest to support these students to thrive, as college sets up student parents and their children for future success. Compared to high school graduates, single mothers who graduate with a bachelor's degree are 61% less likely to live in poverty, earn \$760,000 more over their lifetime, save \$47,000 in public assistance, and contribute \$300,000 more in lifetime taxes.

One of the most basic barriers to student parents' education, especially for single mothers, is knowledge of their Title IX rights for accommodation on campus. Schools cannot discriminate against a pregnant or parenting student and must accommodate their unique needs including a larger desk to accommodate a student's pregnant belly, offering excused absences or rescheduling tests, exams, assignments for pregnancy, childbirth, and doctors' appointments, protecting athletic scholarships with a red-shirt policy, and providing a private space to nurse their baby or pump. Sadly, without knowledge of these rights by students, professors or staff, student parents may drop out of college, face discrimination, or believe their school is unsupportive, creating an off-ramp to college success rather than a bridge forward.

No student should have to choose between her dreams of educational attainment and caring for her children. Pope St. John Paul II wrote that among the rights of families, they possess "the right to exist and progress as a family," and the right "to obtain physical, social, political and economic security," which includes supporting student parents educational goals and ability to raise their children.

Codifying the rights of student parents, raising awareness of these rights as a norm on campus, and designating a point person for students to work with will ensure these bright students can achieve academic parity, continue to learn and provide for their children at the same time.

The Catholic community is comprised of 12 million people in the state and is the largest private nonprofit provider of healthcare, education, and social services for the common good in California. The Conference supports policies that cultivate strong, healthy families in our state.

For these reasons, as the official public policy voice for the Catholic Church of California, we request that you vote "**AYE**" on **AB 1784**. Should you have any questions regarding our position please contact Molly Sheahan, Associate Director for Healthy Families at 916.313.4019 or msheahan@cacatholic.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kathleen Domingo".

Kathleen Buckley Domingo
Executive Director