

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (VA-03)

Full Committee Markup

H.R. 6359, *Pregnant Students' Rights Act*

H.R. 4307, *Enhancing Detection of Human Trafficking Act*

2175 Rayburn House Office Building

Thursday, January 8, 2026 | 10:15 a.m.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and happy New Year, everybody. I hope everyone had a peaceful and joyful holiday season. I look forward to getting back to work to bring down costs and tackle the issues facing Americans.

This morning, we are considering two bills. The first bill fails to provide resources for all pregnant students and jeopardizes women's reproductive health. The second is a bipartisan bill combating human trafficking.

H.R. 6359, *Pregnant Students' Rights Act*

The first bill we will discuss today, the *Pregnant Students' Rights Act*, purportedly requires schools to provide pregnant students with information on resources on campus and in the community, and on accommodations, to assist them in carrying a baby to term while they are pursuing their education. While on its face the bill may appear innocuous, upon further inspection, it is far from innocuous.

In 2022, the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* and triggered a series of state-sanctioned abortion bans, which have created a complicated web of legal challenges for health providers and the patients seeking comprehensive reproductive care. Now, the House Republicans want to further limit students' access to information about available resources, including *all* accommodations and protections available to pregnant or parenting students on college campuses. This is incomplete information and not the complete information the Chairman just suggested.

Instead of sharing unbiased and comprehensive information, this bill requires colleges and universities to distribute only *partial* information about students' existing rights under Title IX, as well as selective information on resources that *solely* encourage students to carry a pregnancy to term. Furthermore, it provides no information for students who want to bring a pregnancy to term, but for medical complications, an abortion may be medically indicated.

Pregnant students already face numerous challenges on campus, including navigating medical attention, emotional support and mental health needs, financial and food insecurity, and academic difficulties— just to name a few. By requiring institutions of higher education to only share information that encourages students to carry a pregnancy to term, pregnant students are being deprived of resources and information to help them make informed decisions, as well as options to address complicated medical needs. As a result, by keeping students in the dark about their rights and all available health resources, the bill could unduly endanger a pregnant student's health.

For example, the legislation fails to require schools to inform students about:

- Contraception, which could help students avoid unplanned pregnancies.
- It fails to require schools to inform students about full rights under existing civil rights laws.
- Resources for those who experience a miscarriage.
- Or information about medical resources available, which might be necessary for high-risk pregnancies.
- Or vital information about rights and resources if a student needs to make the decision to terminate a pregnancy.

Women should be able to control these decisions. By shielding students from health care information, resources, and rights that are available to them, Republicans are denying them the choice to decide what is best for them and their families.

Moreover, this bill fails to provide pregnant and parenting students with any new rights or resources that would *actually* support them, such as child care assistance or affordable health care. Additionally, if a student decides to carry a child to term, this bill will not even provide them with information about how to sign up for Medicaid, SNAP, or WIC.

Additionally, while we are debating the bill, the Trump Administration and Republicans have made historic cuts to safety-net programs that help new parents. For example, in that “Big Ugly Law” cut of about a \$1 trillion from health care, food assistance, and student loan programs. And earlier this year, the Administration cut funding for several CCAMPIS programs that help colleges provide child care services for student parents because the programs employ a “diverse” workforce. The President’s FY 26 budget also proposed zeroing out funding for this program. Taken together, these cuts are deeply harmful to families and do not set pregnant students up for success.

Lastly, the legislation requires colleges to provide information about how a pregnant student can file a complaint with the Department of Education (ED) if a school violates their rights under Title IX. This is particularly insulting considering the Trump Administration, in their efforts to dismantle ED, has cut over half the staff and closed seven of the twelve regional offices of the Office for Civil Rights (OCR), the agency responsible for enforcing pregnant students’ rights under Title IX. Requiring schools to provide pregnant students with information about resources being cut and rights that may not be enforceable is not a serious proposal.

For these reasons, I will vote no on the bill, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

H.R. 4307, *Enhancing Detection of Human Trafficking Act.*

Next, we will consider the *Enhancing Detection of Human Trafficking Act*. Led by you, Chairman Walberg, and the gentlelady from Georgia, Ms. McBath, this bipartisan bill formally requires the Department of Labor (DOL) to continue training staff to spot and report human trafficking. Wage and Hour Division inspectors, for example, have long been trained to identify red flags of human trafficking, including confiscation of identification, withholding of documents or pay, restriction of movement or communication with employees, and threats. No one should be forced to work under threats, abuse, or coercion. This proposal will ensure that DOL continues this vital work. I support this proposal and encourage my colleagues to do the same.

But it is worth noting that this proposal does not make federal investments to combat worker exploitation or support the staffing increases necessary to protect workers. Given that this Administration is currently seeking to cut staff and resources at the very agencies tasked with stopping human trafficking and has repeatedly made immigrant communities less safe by pushing victims even further into the shadows, much more federal investment and oversight is needed.

Today, I understand that the Gentlemen from California, Mr. DeSaulnier, will offer an amendment to ensure the Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) is authorized. This is necessary because President Trump's Fiscal Year 2026 budget would cut ILAB funding by 38 percent. We should all support Mr. DeSaulnier's amendment.

I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues across the aisle to do more to protect the programs that stop human trafficking.

Finally, I would like to say that I am profoundly disappointed that, so far in this Congress, this Committee has not taken the time to address the dismantling of the Department of Education, the Trump Administration's relentless attacks on workers' rights, or the *Affordable Care Act* premium tax credits that just skyrocketed for millions of Americans. And Mr. Chairman, I am renewing my request for the appearance of Health & Human Services Secretary Robert Kennedy, Jr., before this Committee. His failure to appear before this Committee is an affront to our constitutional oversight authority and a devaluation of our jurisdiction over that Department.

I hope that in 2026, we can work together to fix these issues for the sake of the American people.

Thank you, and I yield back the balance of my time.