

# ADVOCATES



## FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

To: Chair McIntosh and members of the Appropriations Committee  
From: Shamoyia Gardiner, Education Policy Director  
Re: House Bill 318: University System of Maryland - Textbooks - Availability of Free Digital Materials (Textbook Transparency Act of 2020)  
Date: February 11, 2020  
Position: Support

ACY's education legislative priorities this year include adequate and equitable funding for public education. As such, we support legislative efforts which will allocate resources to schools in a manner that meets student needs and allows them to maximize their potential in both the pre-K to 12 and post-secondary educational systems. **House Bill 318 offers a simple policy change which will mitigate a major financial burden in higher education.**

The state offers a Student Loan Debt Relief Tax Credit, which aids graduates on the back-end of their educational career. Unfortunately, for some students—those who were unable to complete a course of study due to the financial burden—this benefit is too late or altogether inaccessible.

Years ago, the University of Maryland University College eliminated textbooks for students, citing the thousands of dollars in cost savings for students. This shift was accompanied by vocal support of free, high-quality, online educational resources, which are more easily accessible. HB 318 would require members of the University of Maryland system to operate logically in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, **benefitting low- and middle-income students immediately.**

Student loan debt is at an all-time high nationally, and Maryland is no exception. By last measure (August 2019), **students at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, carry a total of about \$106 million in student loan debt.**<sup>1</sup> The national student loan debt crisis is a central topic in conversations about the future of the American economy, which positions HB 318 as a forward-thinking piece of legislation in mitigating the impact of the issue. For all these reasons, **ACY strongly urges a favorable report on the bill.**

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<sup>1</sup> University of Maryland, Baltimore. 2019

*Advocates for Children and Youth builds a strong Maryland by advancing policies and programs to ensure children of every race, ethnicity, and place of birth can achieve their full potential.*