



House Appropriations Committee

TESTIMONY

Submitted by

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BILL: HB 415 – Higher Education – Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship - Revisions

POSITION: Support

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges ("MACC") representing all of Maryland's 16 community colleges support HB 415, which will allow more students to benefit from the Maryland Promise Program. This is a signature program for community colleges in Maryland and when fully implemented, will help the state reach its 55%-degree attainment goal.

The goal of the Maryland Promise Program is to improve equity by reducing the cost of college. For community college students, Promise is not just another financial aid program, it is an acknowledgement that the state is making a Promise that it will support them if they continue to work towards their academic goal.

The changes to the Promise Program outlined in HB 415 are the result of Senator Pinsky, working with the Maryland community colleges and the Maryland Higher Education Commission to determine the barriers that currently exist in the Program and what can be done to remove the obstacles that students have struggled during implementation. The goal of these changes is to encourage more students to benefit from the Promise Program.

By expanding the eligibility beyond the current limitation of 2 years after high school, MACC believes more Marylanders will be persuaded to earn a degree. Also, by removing the requirement that students must sign a service obligation or the scholarship reverts to a loan, more students will accept the award. The threat of the Promise Scholarship converting to a loan, a requirement that no other financial aid program requires in Maryland, is a dealbreaker for loan adverse students. Such a construct could also have the adverse consequences of placing even more minority students in higher debt, much like historic indicators of student loan debt demonstrate.

There are other administrative corrections in this legislation, which MACC believes are technical in nature that are the result of learning from the initial rolling out of the program. These changes will allow MHEC to awards students in a timelier manner as well as giving students who may need an extra semester to improve their GPA.

Thank you for your serious consideration of this bill and thank you for all your support and efforts to improve Maryland's community colleges for the benefit of the students we serve.