

ADVOCATES



FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

To: Chair Kaiser and members of the Ways and Means Committee
From: Shamoyia Gardiner, Education Policy Director
Re: House Bill 348: AP Opportunities Act
Date: February 5, 2020
Position: Support

Advanced Placement (AP) courses and their subsequent exams can provide college-bound students with rigorous curricula and opportunities to earn college credit prior to entering post-secondary institutions. In addition to allowing students to engage with advanced academic materials, taking and passing AP exams can be a cost-saving measure once students matriculate into the post-secondary educational space. This multi-faceted “leg up” eludes many students from low-income households and students of color across Maryland, though HB 348 would be an effective step to mitigating disparate access to this benefit.

HB 348 requires the state to stand in the gap for students who demonstrate the academic prowess to succeed in AP courses and on the aligned AP exam, yet also demonstrate significant financial need for support in covering the cost of each exam. The bill addresses the needs of students whose financial circumstances often yield complex consequences in other areas of their lives: youth in foster care, youth experiencing homelessness (or housing instability), those living in households which qualify for safety net programs, and those earning 185% or less of the federal poverty level.

ACY particularly appreciates the provision of the bill which qualifies students who can demonstrate that payment of the AP exam fee would constitute a financial hardship—**this is imperative to ensure that students from undocumented and or mixed-status households and student groups like those who are expectant or parenting students, can benefit as readily as their peers in different circumstances.**

A necessary next step will be to address the inequities in how students are placed in AP courses. The Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education has identified a clear example of inequity at work in Montgomery county: **88% of Black and 71% of Latino/a children from low-income households who earn a 5 on their math PARCC in 6th grade are enrolled in Algebra 1 by the end of 7th grade. For white students, that figure jumps to 92%.** *It is therefore imperative, to ensure the success of HB 348, that Maryland adopt a policy which requires districts to automatically enroll any high-performing student in the most rigorous level of courses available in that subject area, including AP-level courses.*

Advocates for Children and Youth urges a favorable report on this bill.

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.

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