



**TESTIMONY FOR HB0216
HIGHER EDUCATION – TUITION EXEMPTION FOR FOSTER CARE RECIPIENTS AND
HOMELESS YOUTH – ALTERATIONS AND REPORTS**

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Valentino-Smith

Committee: Appropriations

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of HB0216 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Our Coalition appreciate how this bill is attempting to address two separate but concurrent problems. For youths in foster care or homeless youths, getting a college degree would generally be unachievable. Having that degree would make a tremendous difference in their future.

Also, having a place to stay while getting that degree, particularly for someone who is homeless, is a huge issue. This bill offers a waiver of tuition for both youths in foster care and homeless youths, and also gives them priority in getting housing on campus. The prospective students must qualify for this aid, but getting it is a giant step forward in terms of getting their lives on track. These youths are some of the most vulnerable residents in our state, and we must help them achieve their promise in any way we can.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.