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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Sponsor Testimony - HB 966 Academic Credit for Prior Learning Examinations**

**March 8, 2022 – House Appropriations Committee**

Chairwoman McIntosh, Vice-Chairman Chang and Esteemed Colleagues,

Thank you for the opportunity to present today on my legislation HB 966, a bill to require that Maryland public institutions of higher education establish uniform standards to award credit for prior learning assessments like Advanced Placement (AP), College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), and International Baccalaureate (IB).

Many states and university systems have already established uniform policies to ensure that students who earn qualifying scores on these assessments are guaranteed credit at public colleges and universities. Thirty-one states have adopted uniform AP credit policies and 19 have established CLEP policies. Of the 31 states or large systems across the US that already have an AP policy in place, none of them have ever reversed their policies. These policies save students time and money, reducing both the time to graduation and student debt loads, while also reducing the cost for the state. Unfortunately, Maryland institutions do not have a uniform policy. Maryland can support its students and adult learners by deliberately and thoughtfully reviewing these assessments and implementing comprehensive standards for awarding credit for prior learning.

While this bill would encompass other programs, I'd like to focus a moment on AP. AP Exams are scored on a scale of one to five with a score of three recommended by the American Council on Education as a score for which college credit should be given. Research shows that students who score a three on at least one AP exam are more likely to enroll in college, more likely to major or minor in the area of their exam, more likely to persist to graduation, and more likely to graduate on time. Research also shows that students who pass an AP exam with a score of three and are placed into the subsequent course, perform as well or better than students who took the traditional classroom course. In 2020, Maryland ranked 6<sup>th</sup> in the nation in AP performance with over 31% of the graduating cohort earning a three or higher on at least one AP Exam, and this number is likely to grow with the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. If students were able to earn credit for these scores, the potential cost savings to the state's students and their families would be over \$63 million.

Presently, Maryland does not have a uniform AP college credit policy in place, which means that some students will not earn college credit for their scores of three. When colleges award credit

for only fours and fives it is often the students who need the credit the most who are left out. Fifty-six percent of low-income students who passed AP tests in Maryland scored a three; this number is 52% for African American students. In 2020, of the Maryland students who earned a three on their AP exams, over 4,200 qualified for free and reduced lunch.

When you look at “acceptable scores” that are granted credit by institutions across the state – there’s often little rhyme or reason. For example: Why is a three on statistics accepted at some community colleges and some USM institutions but not others?

I’d also like to speak briefly about CLEP, which is an appealing option for adult learners who would like to earn college credit for job experience. Earning credit through successful CLEP Exams is extremely beneficial to those who are juggling family, work, and school obligations. In fact, the U.S. Department of Defense has funded CLEP Exams for active-duty service members for over 50 years, helping our service men and women earn credit and placement. If Maryland joined the 19 states that already have a uniform CLEP policy in place, it would not only benefit our high school students, but the large number of returning veterans and active duty military service-members in our state. Also, with the large number of individuals that may be returning to higher education following COVID-19, uniform standards to measure prior learning will be even more important.

### **What Will the Bill Do?**

The legislation requires each public institution of higher education develop and implement policies and procedures for awarding academic credit for prior learning examinations. The policies shall require:

- academic credit be awarded for a minimum score of three on AP examinations;
- academic credit be awarded for a minimum of a 50 on College-Level Examination Program examinations; and
- a determination of the minimum required score for awarding credit on the Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education Diploma Program examination and the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program examination.

Additionally, higher education institutions must determine if the academic credit will be awarded for general education, major, or elective requirements.

Each public institution will publicly post the policies and procedures and report to the Maryland Higher Education Commission the following information:

- the total number of students awarded academic credit for prior learning;
- the total number of academic credits awarded to students for prior learning; and
- the total number of academic credits awarded to matriculating students for prior learning and of those credits were awarded for major requirements and elective requirements.

## **Credit Policies Benefit Students**

While all students stand to benefit, standardized credit policies have a strong impact on the educational opportunities for underserved populations and nontraditional students. In 2020, almost one-third of Maryland students who earned a 3 on their AP Exams identified as underserved minority students and 4,200 qualified for free and reduced lunch. The CLEP program benefits adult learners who often have families and full-time jobs they must juggle with their school obligations. It also supports military personnel and veterans; the Department of Defense has funded CLEP Exams for active-duty service members for over 50 years.

Passage of this legislation will support Maryland's students, returning veterans, and adult learners by providing increased opportunities to access and afford higher education.

I am excited about the change this bill could bring and its positive impact on Maryland students and families. Although the bill has a small fiscal note, the potential savings more than outweigh the costs. College-bound Maryland AP students in the high school class of 2019 who enrolled in a public institution potentially **saved the state over \$9 million in state funding** as a result of their success on 32,163 AP exams with scores of three or higher.

**I urge you to provide a favorable report on HB 966.** I am now pleased to let you hear the firsthand perspective of AP teachers from Caroline, Baltimore and Prince George's Counties.