

Members of the Appropriations Committee:

My name is Mirta Valdés-Bradner and I am an AP Spanish Language and Culture teacher at North Caroline High School in Caroline County where I have taught for the last 19 of my 26 years in education. Caroline County is a rural, agricultural community located in the heart of Maryland's Eastern Shore.

I want to express my support for Delegate Solomon's prior learning credit policy bill, HB 966, Credit for Prior Learning Task Force. Advanced Placement (AP), the College- Level Examination Program (CLEP) and the International Baccalaureate (IB), combine rigorous college-level work course work with nationally recognized assessments. These programs create opportunities for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, age or socioeconomic background, to potentially earn college credit for their hard work in classrooms in our state every school day.

An AP Exam is scored on a scale of 1 to 5 with research determining that scores of 3 and higher are appropriate for earning college credit; yet, some of our public colleges and universities do not give credit for scores of 3, which can have a detrimental impact on students. For example, in my own course, the majority of students who earned a score of 3 on the AP Exam last year, were minority and low-income. Whether intended or not, the lack of a uniform credit policy harms our most vulnerable students making the transition to postsecondary even more challenging.

Protecting credit awarded in transfer is also an issue for Maryland students. Students who start at a community college, may lose all their AP credit when transferring to a four-year school if that school requires a higher AP score. You can imagine how upsetting that would be for a student who thinks they're going to begin their major course studies, but who learns they have to go back and take an introductory course.

One of the parents of a former AP student that last year earned a 3 during the pandemic in the course taught last year virtually said this "As a parent of a future college student, it will greatly impact our ability to send my child to college as college costs are a big factor in our family's current finances. Having the option to take on the additional coursework in high school to meet the requirements of an AP class and taking the AP test that could then grant her college credit is an invaluable benefit to our family's current and future financial stability. The score of 3 being accepted would be also a just reward to her efforts in high school".

In 2020, Maryland ranked 6th in the nation in AP performance with over 31% of its public-school graduating class earning a 3 or higher on at least one AP Exam. We are proud of this position. Most states would like to be where we are. To be clear, this level of success is not achieved by accident, but through the hard work and commitment of students, teachers, administrators, and counselors. Please reward us all for these efforts by creating a stronger prior learning credit policy system.

I thank the committee for its time and attention and would be happy to answer any questions.

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