

JACK BAILEY
Legislative District 29
Calvert and St. Mary's Counties

Judicial Proceedings Committee



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Annapolis Office
James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 402
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3673 · 301-858-3673
800-492-7122 Ext. 3673
Jack.Bailey@senate.state.md.us

District Office
Dorsey Professional Park
23680 Three Notch Road, Unit 101
Hollywood, Maryland 20636
240-309-4238

March 22, 2022

Senate Bill 79 – Higher Education – Senatorial Scholarships – Program Accreditation

Dear Chair McIntosh and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to introduce Senate Bill 79 – Higher Education – Senatorial Scholarships – Program Accreditation. This bill alters provisions of law relating to awarding Senatorial Scholarships to students to use at out-of-State colleges and universities. Under current law, these funds can only be awarded to students who will be studying in an academic area that is not available at a college or university in the State. Senate Bill 79 would require an in-State program of study to be accredited before it can be considered a comparable program.

Two years ago, my Senatorial Scholarship Committee met to consider applications from outstanding students from throughout District 29. One student who was awarded a scholarship believed the program of study that they intended to pursue was not available in Maryland and requested to use the funds to attend a school outside of the State. Upon review of the student's request for unique major status, it was found that a program offered at a Maryland school was considered to be comparable despite the fact that it has not yet been accredited. In order for a school to apply for program accreditation, the program must exist for a few years before it can be evaluated. When my office inquired to the Maryland Higher Education Commission about this issue, we were told that the law as written does not allow MHEC to consider accreditation when evaluating comparable academic programs.

I have no doubt that this school's program will be successful in becoming accredited and I strongly agree with the goal of ensuring Maryland taxpayers' money remains in Maryland. However, it was incredibly difficult to go back to this constituent and make them choose to either enroll in an unaccredited program or lose the financial aid from their Senatorial Scholarship. I don't believe that it is fair or that it is our intention to ask a student to make this serious academic and financial commitment to an unaccredited program.

Senate Bill 79 is emergency legislation so that this change can go into effect before this year's scholarships are awarded. This bill passed the Senate 45-0 and is identical to Senate Bill 249 from last session, which passed the Senate and this Committee unanimously. I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 79. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Bailey".

Senator Jack Bailey
District 29
Calvert and St. Mary's Counties