



House Appropriations Committee

Testimony: HB 390 – Higher Education – Community College Tuition and Residency Waivers – Funding

Testimony Submitted by: Dr. Daria J. Willis, President, Howard Community College

Position: Support/Favorable

Submitted: February 3, 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony about House Bill 390. I appreciate Delegate Feldmark's leadership and the support of other delegates to provide fiscal relief to Maryland's community colleges who collectively waive millions of dollars each year in state-mandated tuition waivers and residency waivers.

While the waivers represent a commendable effort to assist various categories of students, the unintended consequence is that there is a fiscal impact on other students. With an enrollment of credit and noncredit students now close to 23,000 annually at Howard Community College (HCC), the cost of state-mandated waivers is staggering if you consider every waiver offered. HCC loses approximately \$1 million each year from tuition waivers.

HB 390 would provide some financial assistance to help offset the costs that burden community colleges and impact non-waiver students. One of the most costly waivers at HCC is the tuition waiver for senior citizens taking credit courses. The cost at HCC for fiscal year 2021 was \$254,000. Offering this benefit is a noble cause, but it has an impact on other students for whom every tuition dollar is a stretch. In the fall 2022 semester, 47% of HCC credit students received financial aid, and 52% of those students are at or below the poverty line.

This bill is an important step forward in reducing the fiscal burden of state-mandated waivers. It would cover the cost of many – but not all – of those waivers.

I commend Delegate Feldmark on working diligently to pass this bill. She and her co-sponsors from Howard County and around the state understand that community colleges must have financial support to cover the costs of state mandates waivers. By supporting community colleges through HB 390, the General Assembly will ensure its residents have quality, affordable, locally provided higher education to build an even better future for the great State of Maryland.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee and for your continued support of community colleges.