

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2021 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 702
Appropriations

(Delegate Ivey)

Higher Education - Standardized Tests - Prohibition of Use in Student
Admissions

This bill prohibits a public institution of higher education from *requiring* an applicant to submit a standardized test score as part of the admissions process. The University of Maryland School of Medicine or any other public medical school is exempt from this prohibition. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2021.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Public four-year institutions can likely implement test-optional undergraduate and graduate admissions policies using existing resources. Baltimore City Community College is not affected as it does not use standardized tests as part of the admissions process. Revenues are not materially affected.

Local Effect: Local community college finances are not affected. As open-access institutions, local community colleges do not require standardized test scores as part of the admissions process.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: Essentially, the bill requires public institutions of higher education, except the University of Maryland School of Medicine or any other public medical school, to be *test-optional* with regards to undergraduate and graduate admissions.

Current Law:

Admissions Standards

Each public institution of higher education must accept for admission any graduate of an approved public high school (1) who is certified by the high school principal, based on standards of the State Board of Education, as qualified to pursue a course of study at the institution and (2) who meets the admission standards of the institution.

Each public institution of higher education may accept, for special admission, any student who has (1) completed the seventh grade and (2) a scholastic aptitude test (known as the SAT) combined score of 1,200 or an equivalent score on a nationally accepted college entrance examination. A student admitted under this standard does not affect the State or local share of aid provided to the secondary school in which the student is enrolled.

University System of Maryland

Subject to the authority and applicable regulations and policies of the University System of Maryland (USM) Board of Regents, each president of a constituent institution must, in addition to other specified powers and duties, establish admissions standards. The [USM Board of Regents Policy on Undergraduate Admissions \(III-4.00\)](#) requires all freshman applicants who have graduated from high school within three years of intended enrollment to submit a nationally standardized examination score such as the SAT or ACT. Students applying to Salisbury University under its test-optional program are exempt from this requirement.

University of Maryland, College Park Campus

USM must admit as freshmen to the University of Maryland, College Park Campus (UMCP) highly qualified students who have academic profiles that suggest exceptional ability.

Morgan State University

In addition to other specified powers and duties, the Board of Regents of Morgan State University (MSU) may review or adopt policies and procedures of the university with respect to admissions.

State Fiscal Effect: Public four-year institutions can likely implement test-optional undergraduate and graduate admissions policies using existing resources. To the extent additional resources are needed, institutions can increase student admission fees or redirect other resources to the admissions process.

UMCP advises that higher education expenditures increase by almost \$1.5 million annually to implement the bill: \$1.0 million to conduct a live interview with every applicant and \$450,000 to hire additional staff to manage and complete the application review process, more counselor interactions, extensive new technology, and an increase in administrative support. MSU advises that the bill can be implemented using existing resources.

The Department of Legislative Services (DLS) advises that UMCP costs are likely significantly overstated, especially given that the bill requires that institutions be test-optional, not test-blind. Test-optional policies allow students to choose to submit test scores; test-blind policies prohibit institutions from looking at standardized test scores in making an admissions decision, even if a student submits scores to the institution. The major application software portals support test-optional and test-blind policies.

Many students still choose to submit scores to test-optional institutions. According to an interview in the *New York Times*, about 85% of applicants submit test scores to the University of Chicago, a test-optional institution. For those applicants, test-optional policies have no impact on the application process or admissions staff.

Admissions staff evaluates applicants that do not submit a standardized test score on other measures such as grades, recommendations, and personal essays. For those applicants, admissions staff time is redirected from considering test scores to considering other application standards.

Thus, DLS advises that institutions can likely implement test-optional policies using existing resources. To the extent that additional resources are needed to support test-optional policies of particular institutions or programs, institutions will need to increase admissions fees or redirect other higher education resources to the process. It is assumed that any such change has no material fiscal impact.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Baltimore City Community College; University System of Maryland; Morgan State University; *New York Times*; Department of Legislative Services

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