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Ways and Means Committee

Education Subcommittee

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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
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In Support of HB475

Community Colleges - Supplemental Services and Supports for Students With Disabilities Grant Program

Chair McIntosh, Vice-Chair Jackson, and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on HB475. You may remember this bill from 2019, when it was sponsored by then-Delegate Jones. I am honored to carry it forward on behalf of the nearly 8,000 students with disabilities in community colleges across our state to support their success.¹

A law enacted in 2006² required the Maryland Higher Education Commission to establish and administer a grant program for supplemental services and supports for students with disabilities who attend community colleges. The support services included sign language interpreters, readers, education materials written in Braille, tutors, note takers, and specialized software.

Funding for these essential services ended in 2009, but both the need for these services and the cost of providing them have increased. Since state funding ended, Maryland community colleges have demonstrated their commitment to helping students with disabilities fulfill their maximum educational potential by paying approximately \$5.3 million per year to cover these services.³ They are seeking to offset a portion of these costs.

This bill will aid community colleges by requiring the Governor, beginning in fiscal 2022, to include a general fund appropriation of at least \$2.5 million annually in the state budget for the Maryland Higher Education Commission.

When the Blueprint for Maryland's Future improves K-12 opportunities for all students, including students with disabilities, one of the many positive outcomes will be that Maryland's community colleges will enroll substantially more students requiring support services. Improving support services is essential for the continued success of these students, and the requested supplemental appropriation will enable Maryland's community colleges to maintain the high level of services provided.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on this bill.

¹ Maryland Community College Chief Student Affairs Officers

² HB1681 of 2006, Chapter 419

<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgaweb/site/Search/Legislation?target=/2006rs/billfile/hb1681.htm>

³ Maryland Community College Chief Student Affairs Officers