

EQUITY FOR ALL KIDS



To: Chair McIntosh and members of the Appropriations Committee
From: Shamoyia Gardiner, Education Policy Director
Re: House Bill 1011: Maryland Higher Education Outreach and College Access Pilot Program – Alterations (Maryland College Access Act)
Date: February 25, 2020
Position: Support

First-generation (first-gen) college students are typically defined as coming from families “where their biological parents did not complete a four-year college degree”.¹ Though an imperfect definition, it captures many of the complex barriers facing first-gen students: the lack of parental support in navigating post-secondary educational pathways and statistically lower economic status due to assumptions about how the lack of degree attainment has hindered parents’ economic mobility are just a high-level sampling.

While first-gen students are not all from low-income circumstances and not all college-goers in low-income circumstances are first-gen students, the overlap in the two populations (and thus, the augmented barriers to their success), must be taken into account. Years ago, Maryland attempted to do just that.

The Maryland Higher Education Outreach and College Access Pilot Program (the Program) has seen major successes in its implementation—more than 680 high school students from low-income families matriculated into post-secondary educational careers—and had accompanying intangible benefits.² The 4000 students, 1200 parents, and 200 school-based staff who were impacted by the Program will have immeasurable impacts on their peers, children, and school community due to the influence and information provided by participating programs.³

House Bill 1011 would repeal the “pilot” status of the Program and secure an annual appropriation to allow partners to continue serving students from low-income backgrounds—many of whom are also first-gen students and will go on to alter the trajectory of their families’ lives. **ACY strongly urges a favorable report on this bill.**

¹ Center for First-Generation Student Success. *Defining First-Generation*. November 20, 2017.

² Maryland Higher Education Commission. *FY 2019 Annual Report: Maryland Higher Education Outreach and College Access Pilot Program*. December 2019.

³ Ibid