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**Written Testimony before the Maryland House Appropriations Committee
HB 384 - Institutions of Higher Education - Transcripts –
Prohibition on Punitive Measures Related to Student Debt
February 14, 2023**

SUPPORT

Chair Barnes and members of the committee. On behalf of the 20,000 members of the American Federation of Teachers – Maryland (AFT-MD), we ask for a favorable report on HB 384, which will require Maryland institutions of higher education to report on the withholding of transcripts and other information due to a student’s unpaid fees and services.

Colleges use students’ academic transcripts and diplomas as a debt collection tool to fulfill their financial obligations to the university. These financial obligations include unpaid library fines, parking tickets, and tuition and fees. Many of these fines are for small amounts.

When a school prevents a student from accessing their academic transcripts, they are also preventing a student from accessing financial aid, scholarships, internships, and job opportunities.

Rather than prohibiting this practice HB 384 seeks to understand the scope of the problem. It requires colleges and universities to collect information on the number of transcripts withheld and the amount owed by the college student. With this data, policymakers can then consider appropriate measures to remedy the situation.

For all these reasons, we urge you to move favorably on HB 384. Thank you.

