

SHANEKA HENSON
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Ways and Means Committee

Joint Committee on
Children, Youth, and Families



The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 21, 2023

Chair Brian J. Feldman
Vice Chair Cheryl C. Kagan
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

Thank you for considering HB295 University System of Maryland – Student Withdrawal – Reimbursement of Tuition and Fees (The Cameron Carden Act of 2023). This bill will allow students to safely and efficiently withdraw from universities within Maryland’s educational system under certain extenuating circumstances that pose a threat to the student’s physical or mental well-being.

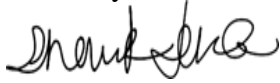
I am reintroducing this bill with amendments that were aligned to through the 2022 Session. Currently, the state of Maryland has no standard requirement of reimbursement for students needing to withdraw based upon health restrictions. Each institution is free to construct its own policies, and many have allowances for withdrawal for reasons of physical injury, illness, or hospitalization. While I commend individual institutions for making these policies, HB295 will help to standardize these policies across our state university system and ensure that mental health and wellness is an acceptable rationale for withdrawal.

No student should have to decide between receiving the care they need and losing thousands of dollars. This was the decision faced by Cameron Carden. Because of racially charged events on campus generally, and personally being a target of racism, Cameron’s mental health began to suffer. Not wanting to lose his tuition money, Cameron attempted to persevere in his classes. His family noticed changes in his behavior and demeanor and encouraged him to withdraw to support his mental wellbeing. Despite these circumstances, Cameron received no reimbursements for the semester due to his inability to meet the time constraints the university had imposed.

Unfortunately, we cannot fully know how many students share Cameron’s experience or feel they must suffer through mental health challenges because of the financial consequences of

withdrawal. This bill ensures that policies are standardized, and that mental health is an acceptable rationale for withdrawal. I urge a favorable report on HB295.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shaneka Henson", written in a cursive style.

Delegate Shaneka Henson