



Maryland Youth Advisory Council
c/o Governor's Office of Crime
Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services
100 Community Place,
Crownsville, MD 21032

Grace Minakowski, *Chair*
Will O'Donnell, *Vice-Chair*
Folashade Epebinu, *Secretary*

January 30, 2024

Re: HB 004 | Institutions of Higher Education – Admissions Standards – Prohibition on Consideration of Legacy Preference

Dear Delegate Lewis and Members of the House Appropriations Committee,

The Maryland Youth Advisory Council prides itself on being a coalition of diverse young advocates and leaders who serve as a voice for youth in the state of Maryland. As leaders in our communities, and as appointees of the Governor, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, Maryland Association of Student Councils, Maryland Higher Education Commission and the University System of Maryland, we take every opportunity to address relevant issues by influencing legislation, spreading public awareness and serving as a liaison between youth and policymakers regarding issues facing youth.

Legacy admissions in America can be traced back to the 1920s when it was used as a mode of preventing Jewish students from entering the higher education scene, promoting white, Protestant male dominance on college campuses.¹ Today, admitting relatives of alumni reinforces a cycle of economic inequality and creates a barrier for low-income & first-generation students, working counter to many admission's offices' desire to diversify undergraduate enrollment. In 2023, it was found that an average of 13% of student bodies in higher education institutions were made of legacy admissions. Upon examination of historical admissions data, legacy students are more likely to be white and have parents who are more likely to donate when compared to non-legacy students.² Yet, a study conducted by the University of Chicago on Harvard University admissions showed that legacy students had lower high school grades and test scores that were non-distinguishable from non-legacies, and roughly $\frac{3}{4}$ of white "ALDC" students (recruited athletes, legacies, those on the dean's interest list, and children of faculty and staff) would have been rejected if not for their preferred status.³

With the recent Supreme Court overturning of race as a standard for admission, it should follow that legacy admission *also* be omitted. Legacy preference is rooted in the desire for higher education institutions to bring in profit (which is counter to the mission of universities and colleges to advance

¹ Kim, A. (2023, May 18). *Legacy Admissions: An insidious form of racial Discrimination — Columbia Undergraduate Law Review*. Columbia Undergraduate Law Review. <https://www.culawreview.org/journal/legacy-admissions-an-insidious-form-of-racial-discrimination>

² Castilla, E. J., & Poskanzer, E. (2022). Through the front door: Why do organizations (Still) prefer legacy applicants? *American Sociological Review*, 87(5), 782–826. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00031224221122889>

³ Arcidiacono, P., Kinsler, J., & Ransom, T. (2022). Legacy and athlete preferences at Harvard. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 40(1), 133–156. <https://doi.org/10.1086/713744>

knowledge & innovation). Children of alumni are more likely to have parents which donate to their alma mater. Further, legacy students who are admitted have a 74% enrollment rate versus a 27% enrollment rate for non-legacies, allowing universities to better plan for tuition and projected revenues.⁴ With this system, students from already-affluent families continue to receive high-quality education and access to occupational opportunities provided by a college degree.

HB 004 prohibits institutions of higher education that receive state funds (private and public) from considering a legacy preference as an eligible criteria for admissions standards at the institution. It also allows an institution of higher education to ask applicants for information regarding familial relationships to alums of the institution for data collection purposes. The Council has voted in favor of **HB 004** as it aligns with the Council's Legislative Platform supporting:

- a) Programs that keep high achieving secondary school students in Maryland for higher education (Article III, Section 2, Clause G), including reformed college admissions programs.
- b) Initiatives to encourage youth to stay in school and continue their education (Article III, Section 2, Clause I)

For the sake of Maryland youth, the Maryland General Assembly should act to provide an equal, fair selection process for college admissions. Higher education admission should not be a matter of gaming the system and securing maximum profits; it should be a matter of merit alone. These institutions will not hold themselves accountable, and it therefore requires our government to act. For these reasons, the Council supports **HB 004** and respectfully requests a favorable report from the committee.

Sincerely,



Grace Minakowski, Chair
Maryland Youth Advisory Council

⁴ Barshay, J., & Barshay, J. (2022, October 25). *PROOF POINTS: Why elite colleges won't give up legacy admissions*. The Hechinger Report.
<https://hechingerreport.org/proof-points-why-elite-colleges-cant-give-up-legacy-admissions/>