



HB 607

Yolanda Wilson, President, College of Southern Maryland

Position: Favorable

February 20, 2024

As the President of the College of Southern Maryland, we are writing in support of HB 607 Community Colleges – Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship – Requirements.

Since establishing the Promise Scholarship Program in 2019 for Maryland’s community college students, the very premise has been that college is for everyone. This message is particularly impactful for students who may have no expectation that post-secondary education is reachable for them. For the College of Southern Maryland, this Promise has been extended over the past five years to 870 students, totaling \$2.6 million.

The key points of HB 607 address the ability to increase access for students by further expanding the recent adjustments in the Promise criteria that opened funding to students enrolled part-time, starting in 2023-2024. Currently students are eligible for funding if enrolled in a minimum of six credits; in prior years eligibility was limited to students carrying a minimum of 12 credits per term. Because of this recent adjustment, an additional 80 students are expected to receive Promise funds this academic year.

This year, the College certified our first two non-credit/workforce development Promise eligible students, despite this population being eligible for this program since 2020. While non-credit students are eligible for the Promise scholarships, the current process is complex, requiring completion of the FAFSA and a non-credit application. Most non-credit/workforce development programs at community colleges are not Title IV (Pell, loans) eligible, and the College of Southern Maryland currently has zero non-credit Title IV eligible programs.

We may not know how many more students might have taken advantage of the Promise program if the FAFSA requirement were not in place, but we do believe that requiring students to complete the FAFSA to be considered for non-credit Promise is a step that causes extraordinary confusion - “Why do I need to complete the FAFSA if I can’t use that aid for these programs?” HB 607 removes this barrier and increases access for our non-credit students.

We ask the Appropriations Committee to provide a favorable report for HB 607 to expand access and remove barriers so as to further realize this Promise for our non-credit students.

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