
TO: Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

BILL: Senate Bill (SB) 517 - Next Generation Scholars of Maryland Program - Program Administrator - Alterations

DATE: February 14, 2024

POSITION: Support

Chair Feldman and Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee:

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) seek to express their support for **Senate Bill (SB) 517** - Next Generation Scholars of Maryland Program - Program Administrator - Alterations, which would shift the administration of the Next Generation Scholars Program from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC).

MSDE has been managing the grant program since it was established by the Maryland General Assembly in 2016. During that time, the majority of questions and requests for training and technical assistance from non-profit organization grantees have focused on financial aid and the Howard P. Rawlings Guaranteed Access Grant, areas where MSDE staff do not have background knowledge and expertise. By moving the Next Generation Scholars Program to the state agency that administers numerous financial aid programs, streamlined customer service and support could be provided to the nonprofit organizations, parents, and students, with the hope of ultimately bolstering the number of students who successfully apply for the Guaranteed Access Grant.

MSDE is committed to collaborating with MHEC to ensure that a smooth transition of the program to MHEC occurs without interruption of funding to non-profit organization grantees or services to students and families. MSDE would continue to engage with MHEC, local education agencies, and institutions of higher education to assist with administering and evaluating the program and to develop the required annual report to the Maryland General Assembly and the Governor.

However, MSDE does acknowledge that a dedicated position at MHEC would be required to effectively administer the Next Generation Scholars programs and related grants. We respectfully suggest that the funding for said position be deducted from the total \$5 million state funding for the program without negatively affecting the program activities and services.

MSDE and the State Board request that the committee consider this information on **SB 517**. Please contact Dr. Akilah Alleyne, Executive Director of Government Affairs, Education Policy, and Government Relations, at Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov or at 410-767-0504 or Zach Hands, Executive Director of the State Board, at Zachary.hands1@maryland.gov or at 443-915-6094, if you would like any additional information.