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March 3, 2026

The Honorable Ben Barnes
Chair, Appropriations Committee
120 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Chairman Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and the Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee,

The Maryland Higher Education Commission respectfully requests a favorable report on HB 720 - Higher Education – Douglas J. J. Peters Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts Scholarship – Repeal of Termination Date, sponsored by Delegate Patterson

HB 720 ensures that Maryland's veterans and their families continue to have access to critical educational support. The scholarship was established to honor those who have served in the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts — and to provide meaningful assistance for higher education costs, including tuition, fees, room, and board. By eliminating the sunset date and the renewal limitation, this bill will allow future generations of eligible veterans and their dependents to pursue postsecondary education without being constrained by arbitrary time limits.

Maryland should be a leader in honoring the service and sacrifice of our veterans. Removing the termination date aligns with our State's long-standing commitment to supporting military families and reinforcing opportunities for economic mobility through education. Extending this scholarship indefinitely will help:

- **Increase access to higher education** for veterans and their dependents statewide;
- **Enhance workforce readiness** by helping veterans transition into civilian careers with the credentials needed for success;
- **Honor the service of Maryland's military community** by offering sustained support rather than temporary programs.

This legislation also ensures clarity and fairness. Veterans currently serving and those who have not yet begun their educational journeys deserve certainty that this benefit remains available throughout their academic careers. Removing the renewal limitation ensures recipients are not penalized solely because of timing within the award period.

Despite these systemic limitations, the passage of HB 720 remains a priority to ensure that the baseline promise of support to our veterans does

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not expire. In conclusion, **House Bill 720** is a thoughtful, equity-focused policy that supports both veterans and the State's economic future. I respectfully urge the committee to give HB 720 a **favorable report**.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Meghan Music, Executive Director of External and Legislative Affairs.

Yours in Service,

Handwritten signature of Sanjay Rai in black ink.

Sanjay Rai

Secretary, Maryland Higher Education Commission

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