



HB 60: Sickle Cell Disease - Institutions of Higher Education - Policies, Procedures, and Educational Campaigns

Position: Favorable

To the Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee:

House Bill 60 addresses a critical and persistent gap in how Maryland's institutions of higher education support students living with serious genetic and rare diseases, including sickle cell disease. This legislation ensures that students with complex, chronic medical conditions are not placed at an academic disadvantage due to health circumstances beyond their control.

Students with sickle cell disease frequently experience unpredictable pain crises, fatigue, hospitalizations, and medical complications that directly interfere with class attendance, examinations, and coursework. Despite existing federal protections, many students continue to face inconsistent accommodation processes, delayed approvals, and inflexible academic policies that undermine their ability to remain enrolled and make timely progress toward graduation.

HB 60 provides needed clarity and accountability. By establishing clearer expectations for institutions of higher education, the bill strengthens implementation of disability protections and shifts accommodations from discretionary, case-by-case decisions to more standardized and proactive practices. This consistency reduces unnecessary administrative barriers while ensuring that students receive reasonable academic flexibility aligned with their documented medical needs.

The bill also advances educational equity. Sickle cell disease disproportionately affects Black and underserved communities, and gaps in institutional support contribute to higher withdrawal rates, interrupted academic pathways, and long-term economic consequences. HB 60 helps ensure that capable and motivated students are not forced to choose between managing a life-threatening illness and completing their education. Importantly, HB 60 does not lower academic standards. Instead, it removes preventable structural barriers that impede student success and affirms that students with chronic and genetic conditions belong in Maryland's colleges and universities with the support necessary to thrive.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 60.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

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Founder & Executive Director of the Sickle Cell Coalition of Maryland

sicklecellcoalitionofmd.org