

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:

My name is Teanika Hoffman, and I am a person living with sickle cell disease. I am here today in support of House Bill 60 because I know firsthand what it means to pursue higher education while managing a serious, lifelong medical condition—without adequate institutional support.

As a student, I missed classes due to hospitalizations, pain crises, and medical complications directly related to my sickle cell disease. These absences were not a choice. They were necessary for my survival. Yet, despite providing documentation and communicating my needs, I was not consistently supported by my university. Accommodations were unclear, delayed, or denied, and I was often made to feel as though my illness was an inconvenience rather than a legitimate medical condition.

Instead of receiving flexibility, I faced rigid attendance policies, limited understanding from faculty, and a lack of coordination between disability services and academic departments. I was expected to perform as though my condition did not exist. At times, this made continuing my education more difficult than managing the disease itself.

House Bill 60 would have made a meaningful difference in my academic experience. This legislation sets clear expectations for institutions of higher education to support students living with sickle cell disease and other serious medical conditions. It ensures that students are not left to navigate inconsistent accommodation systems or repeatedly justify their health needs to remain in good academic standing.

HB 60 is not about asking for special treatment. It is about fairness, access, and equity. Students with sickle cell disease are capable, motivated, and deserving of the opportunity to succeed academically without being penalized for medical realities beyond their control. No student should have to choose between attending class and going to the hospital.

If HB 60 had been in place during my time as a student, I believe my educational journey would have been less stressful, more stable, and more supportive. I want current and future students living with sickle cell disease to attend Maryland's colleges and universities knowing their health will be respected and their education protected.

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

Thank you for allowing me to share my experience and for considering this important legislation.

Respectfully submitted,

Teanika Hoffman, MA, CHW

Sickle Cell Patient

