

HOUSE BILL 1297

Q3, F2

6lr3239
CF SB 805

By: **Delegate Palakovich Carr**

Introduced and read first time: February 12, 2026

Assigned to: Ways and Means

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Income Tax – Student Loan Debt Relief Tax Credit – Alterations**

3 FOR the purpose of altering certain provisions of law governing the recapture of certain
4 amounts of the credit against the State income tax for certain individuals with
5 student loan debt to require the recapture of the unused amount of the credit rather
6 than the total amount; authorizing the Maryland Higher Education Commission to
7 extend the period of time that an individual who claims the credit has to prove that
8 the individual used the credit to repay the individual’s student loan debt under
9 certain circumstances; and generally relating to the Student Loan Debt Relief Tax
10 Credit.

11 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
12 Article – Tax – General
13 Section 10–740
14 Annotated Code of Maryland
15 (2022 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

16 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
17 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

18 **Article – Tax – General**

19 10–740.

20 (a) (1) In this section the following words have the meanings indicated.

21 (2) “Commission” means the Maryland Higher Education Commission.

22 (3) “Qualified taxpayer” means an individual who has:

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 (i) incurred at least \$20,000 in undergraduate or graduate student
2 loan debt or both; and

3 (ii) has at least \$5,000 in outstanding undergraduate or graduate
4 student loan debt or both when submitting an application under subsection (c) of this
5 section.

6 (b) Subject to the limitations of this section, a qualified taxpayer may claim a
7 credit against the State income tax for the taxable year in which the Commission certifies
8 a tax credit under this section.

9 (c) (1) (i) By September 15 of each year, an individual shall submit an
10 application to the Commission for the credit allowed under this section.

11 (ii) The individual shall submit with the application an assurance
12 that the individual will use any credit approved under this section for the repayment of the
13 individual's undergraduate or graduate student loan debt or both as soon as practicable.

14 (iii) 1. [The total] **EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN SUBPARAGRAPH**
15 **(IV) OF THIS PARAGRAPH, THE** amount of the credit claimed under this section **THAT**
16 **WAS NOT USED TO REPAY THE INDIVIDUAL'S UNDERGRADUATE OR GRADUATE**
17 **STUDENT LOAN DEBT** shall be recaptured if the individual does not use the **ENTIRE** credit
18 approved under this section for the repayment of the individual's undergraduate or
19 graduate student loan debt or both within 3 years from the close of the taxable year for
20 which the credit is claimed.

21 2. The individual who claimed the credit shall pay the [total]
22 **UNUSED** amount of the credit claimed as taxes payable to the State for the taxable year in
23 which the event requiring recapture of the credit occurs.

24 **(IV) THE COMMISSION MAY GRANT AN EXTENSION OF THE**
25 **PERIOD WITHIN WHICH THE INDIVIDUAL IS REQUIRED TO USE THE CREDIT CLAIMED**
26 **FOR THE REPAYMENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL'S UNDERGRADUATE OR GRADUATE**
27 **STUDENT LOAN DEBT IF THE INDIVIDUAL WAS UNABLE TO REPAY THE STUDENT**
28 **LOAN DEBT DUE TO:**

29 1. **A PERIOD OF FORBEARANCE RELATED TO LITIGATION**
30 **CONCERNING THE FEDERAL SAVING ON A VALUABLE EDUCATION (SAVE) STUDENT**
31 **LOAN REPAYMENT PLAN;**

32 2. **THE INABILITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL TO CHANGE FROM**
33 **ONE INCOME-BASED REPAYMENT PLAN TO ANOTHER PLAN DUE TO UNDERSTAFFING**
34 **AT THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION; OR**

1 **3. A PERIOD OF FORBEARANCE DURING WHICH THE**
2 **INDIVIDUAL WAS AWAITING AN AGREEMENT UNDER THE FEDERAL PUBLIC SERVICE**
3 **LOAN FORGIVENESS BUYBACK PROGRAM AND UNABLE TO MAKE ANY STUDENT**
4 **LOAN DEBT PAYMENTS.**

5 (2) By December 15 of each year the Commission shall certify to the
6 individual the amount of any tax credit approved by the Commission under this section,
7 not to exceed \$5,000.

8 (3) (i) For tax year 2025, the total amount of tax credits approved by
9 the Commission under this section may not exceed \$9,000,000.

10 (ii) For any taxable year after 2025, the total amount of tax credits
11 approved by the Commission under this section may not exceed \$18,000,000.

12 (4) (i) Except as provided in subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph, the
13 Commission shall reserve \$9,000,000 of the tax credits authorized under paragraph (3) of
14 this subsection for the following individuals in the following order of priority:

15 1. State employees who graduated from institutions of
16 higher education in the State where at least 40% of the attendees are eligible to receive
17 federal Pell Grants; and

18 2. all other State employees not described under item 1 of
19 this subparagraph.

20 (ii) If the total amount of tax credits applied for by individuals
21 described under subparagraph (i) of this paragraph is less than \$9,000,000 for a taxable
22 year, the Commission may make available the unused amount of credits for use by other
23 qualified taxpayers.

24 (5) To claim the tax credit allowed under this section, an individual shall
25 attach a copy of the Commission's certification of the approved credit amount to the income
26 tax return.

27 (d) Subject to subsection (c)(4) of this section, the Commission shall prioritize tax
28 credit recipients and amounts based on the following criteria:

29 (1) whether the qualified taxpayers are graduates from institutions of
30 higher education in the State where at least 40% of the attendees are eligible to receive
31 federal Pell Grants; and

32 (2) in an order of priority determined by the Commission, whether the
33 qualified taxpayers:

34 (i) have higher debt burden to income ratios;

1 (ii) graduated from an institution of higher education located in the
2 State;

3 (iii) did not receive a tax credit in a prior year; or

4 (iv) were eligible for in-State tuition.

5 (e) If the tax credit allowed under this section in any taxable year exceeds the
6 total tax otherwise payable by the qualified taxpayer for that taxable year, the qualified
7 taxpayer may claim a refund in the amount of the excess.

8 (f) The Commission shall establish and implement by September 1, 2024, an
9 outreach and marketing plan to:

10 (1) make eligible taxpayers aware of the availability of the tax credit
11 provided under this section; and

12 (2) encourage institutions of higher education in the State to advise new
13 graduates, particularly those with an interest in public service, of the availability of the tax
14 credit provided under this section.

15 (g) (1) On or before January 1 each year, the Commission shall report to the
16 Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1257 of the State Government Article, the General
17 Assembly on:

18 (i) the number of applicants for the tax credit authorized under this
19 section;

20 (ii) the number and amounts of tax credits awarded under this
21 section to qualified taxpayers;

22 (iii) a breakdown of the age, gender, race, income, and counties of
23 residency of qualified taxpayers who receive the credit; and

24 (iv) any additional information that the Commission deems relevant.

25 (2) On or before January 1, 2026, the Commission shall report to the
26 Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1257 of the State Government Article, the General
27 Assembly recommendations for changes to statute or regulations that would better target
28 the allocation of tax credits under this program.

29 (h) The Commission shall adopt regulations to carry out the provisions of this
30 section.

31 (i) The tax credit under this section shall be referred to as the Student Loan Debt
32 Relief Tax Credit.

1 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That, on or before October 1, 2026,
2 the Maryland Higher Education Commission shall adopt procedures by which an individual
3 may apply for the waiver described under § 10–740(c)(1)(iv) of the Tax – General Article,
4 as enacted by Section 1 of this Act.

5 SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July
6 1, 2026, and shall be applicable to all taxable years beginning after December 31, 2025.