

SENATE BILL 324

F2, F1

6lr2277
CF HB 700

By: **Senator Augustine**

Introduced and read first time: January 22, 2026

Assigned to: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Committee Report: Favorable with amendments

Senate action: Adopted

Read second time: March 3, 2026

CHAPTER _____

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Higher Education – Public Senior Higher Education Institutions – Direct**
3 **Admission Program and Study**

4 FOR the purpose of establishing a direct admission program at participating public senior
5 higher education institutions for certain eligible high school students beginning in a
6 certain academic year; requiring the Maryland Higher Education Commission ~~to~~
7 ~~administer the direct admission program through a certain financial aid system and~~
8 ~~the Common Application~~, the State Department of Education, and public senior
9 higher education institutions to establish eligibility requirements for the direct
10 admission program; requiring the ~~State Department of Education~~ and the
11 Commission jointly to establish a process for notifying the Commission of the high
12 school students who have met ~~the college and career readiness standard~~ certain
13 eligibility requirements each school year; requiring the Commission, in consultation
14 with the Department, to conduct a study on administering the direct admission
15 program; and generally relating to a direct admission program and public senior
16 higher education institutions.

17 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
18 Article – Education
19 Section 7–205.1(a) and (c)(2)
20 Annotated Code of Maryland
21 (2025 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

22 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
23 Article – Education

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.



1 Section 10–101(a) and (m)
2 Annotated Code of Maryland
3 (2022 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

4 BY adding to
5 Article – Education
6 Section 15–101.1
7 Annotated Code of Maryland
8 (2022 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

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

11 **Article – Education**

12 7–205.1.

13 (a) In this section, “CCR standard” means the college and career readiness
14 standards established under this section.

15 (c) (2) A student shall meet the CCR standard when the student meets a
16 standard in English language arts, mathematics, and, when practicable, science that
17 enables the student to be successful in entry level credit bearing courses or postsecondary
18 education training at a State community college.

19 10–101.

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

21 (m) “Public senior higher education institution” means:

22 (1) The constituent institutions of the University System of Maryland and
23 the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science;

24 (2) Morgan State University; and

25 (3) St. Mary’s College of Maryland.

26 **15–101.1.**

27 **(A) (1) IN THIS SECTION THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS**
28 **INDICATED.**

29 **(2) “CCR STANDARD” HAS THE MEANING STATED IN § 7–205.1(A) OF**
30 **THIS ARTICLE.**

1 (3) "HIGH SCHOOL" MEANS A PUBLIC SCHOOL IN THE STATE THAT
2 OFFERS A PROGRAM OF INSTRUCTION FOR AT LEAST GRADES 11 AND 12, INCLUDING
3 A VIRTUAL SCHOOL ESTABLISHED UNDER TITLE 7, SUBTITLE 14 OF THIS ARTICLE.

4 (B) ~~(1)~~ BEGINNING IN THE ~~2027-2028~~ 2028-2029 ACADEMIC YEAR,
5 THERE IS A DIRECT ADMISSION PROGRAM AT PARTICIPATING PUBLIC SENIOR
6 HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS FOR ELIGIBLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO
7 MEET THE ~~CCR STANDARD ESTABLISHED UNDER § 7-205.1 OF THIS ARTICLE~~
8 ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS SPECIFIED IN THE MEMORANDUM OF
9 UNDERSTANDING ENTERED INTO UNDER SUBSECTION (C) OF THIS SECTION.

10 ~~(2) THE COMMISSION SHALL ADMINISTER THE DIRECT ADMISSION~~
11 ~~PROGRAM THROUGH THE COMMISSION'S FINANCIAL AID SYSTEM AND THE COMMON~~
12 ~~APPLICATION.~~

13 (C) (1) THE COMMISSION, THE DEPARTMENT, THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM
14 OF MARYLAND, MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY, AND ST. MARY'S COLLEGE OF
15 MARYLAND SHALL:

16 (I) ESTABLISH ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DIRECT
17 ADMISSION PROGRAM, WHICH SHALL INCLUDE, AT MINIMUM, COMPLETION OF THE
18 CCR STANDARD AND A MINIMUM HIGH SCHOOL GRADE POINT AVERAGE; AND

19 (II) ENTER INTO A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING THAT
20 SPECIFIES THE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DIRECT ADMISSION
21 PROGRAM.

22 (2) A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT IS ELIGIBLE FOR DIRECT ADMISSION TO
23 A PARTICIPATING PUBLIC SENIOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION UNDER THIS
24 SECTION IF THE STUDENT:

25 ~~(1)~~ (I) HAS COMPLETED OR IS EXPECTED TO COMPLETE ALL OF
26 THE PREREQUISITE COURSES THAT ARE REQUIRED BY THE INSTITUTION TO WHICH
27 THE STUDENT APPLIES BY THE STUDENT'S ANTICIPATED MATRICULATION DATE;

28 ~~(2)~~ (II) ~~HAS MET THE CCR STANDARD ESTABLISHED BY THE~~
29 ~~DEPARTMENT~~ MEETS THE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS SPECIFIED IN THE
30 MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING;

31 ~~(3)~~ (III) APPLIES FOR ADMISSION TO AN INSTITUTION:

32 ~~(1)~~ 1. BY THE REQUIRED APPLICATION DEADLINE
33 ESTABLISHED BY THE INSTITUTION; AND

1 ~~(H)~~ 2. DURING GRADE 12 OF HIGH SCHOOL;

2 ~~(4)~~ (IV) MEETS THE OTHER COURSE REQUIREMENTS ESTABLISHED
3 BY THE INSTITUTION, IF ANY; AND

4 ~~(5)~~ (V) MEETS THE ADDITIONAL CRITERIA ESTABLISHED BY THE
5 INSTITUTION, IF ANY.

6 (D) (1) A PUBLIC SENIOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION MAY CHOOSE
7 TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DIRECT ADMISSION PROGRAM UNDER THIS SECTION.

8 (2) IF A PUBLIC SENIOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION CHOOSES
9 TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DIRECT ADMISSION PROGRAM, THE PARTICIPATING
10 INSTITUTION SHALL:

11 (I) 1. AGREE TO USE THE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS
12 SPECIFIED IN THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING;

13 2. DETERMINE ANY ADDITIONAL COURSES OR CRITERIA
14 NEEDED FOR A STUDENT TO QUALIFY FOR DIRECT ADMISSION TO THE INSTITUTION,
15 IF ANY; AND

16 ~~2.~~ 3. REPORT THE ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS UNDER
17 ITEM ~~1~~ 2 OF THIS ITEM TO THE COMMISSION EACH YEAR;

18 (II) WAIVE THE APPLICATION FEE FOR STUDENTS WHO APPLY
19 FOR DIRECT ADMISSION TO THE INSTITUTION; AND

20 (III) OFFER CONDITIONAL DIRECT ADMISSION TO EACH HIGH
21 SCHOOL STUDENT WHO MEETS THE ELIGIBILITY ~~CRITERIA UNDER SUBSECTION (C)~~
22 ~~OF THIS SECTION~~ REQUIREMENTS SPECIFIED IN THE MEMORANDUM OF
23 UNDERSTANDING.

24 (3) A PARTICIPATING INSTITUTION MAY:

25 (I) VERIFY ANY INFORMATION REQUIRED BY THE INSTITUTION
26 AND PROVIDED BY A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT INDICATING ELIGIBILITY FOR DIRECT
27 ADMISSION UNDER THIS SECTION; AND

28 (II) REVOKE A STUDENT'S OFFER OF DIRECT ADMISSION AT THE
29 INSTITUTION IF THE STUDENT:

1 1. IS NOT AWARDED A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA BEFORE
2 THE STUDENT'S ANTICIPATED MATRICULATION DATE;

3 2. ~~HAS NOT MET THE CCR STANDARD ESTABLISHED BY~~
4 ~~THE DEPARTMENT~~ DOES NOT MEET THE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS SPECIFIED IN
5 THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING;

6 3. ENGAGES IN ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT; OR

7 4. AFTER THE STUDENT'S APPLICATION IS SUBMITTED,
8 EXPERIENCES SIGNIFICANTLY DECLINING GRADES THAT, UNDER THE
9 INSTITUTION'S STANDARD APPLICATION PROCESS, WOULD JUSTIFY THE
10 INSTITUTION REVOKING AN OFFER FOR ADMISSION.

11 (E) THE DEPARTMENT AND THE COMMISSION JOINTLY SHALL ESTABLISH
12 A PROCESS FOR NOTIFYING THE COMMISSION OF EACH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT IN
13 THE STATE WHO HAS MET THE ~~CCR STANDARD~~ ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS
14 SPECIFIED IN THE MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING EACH SCHOOL YEAR.

15 (F) ~~(1)~~ THE COMMISSION SHALL ESTABLISH A PROCESS TO OFFER
16 CONDITIONAL DIRECT ADMISSION FROM EACH PARTICIPATING INSTITUTION TO
17 EACH ELIGIBLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT ~~BASED ON:~~

18 ~~(i) THE CCR STANDARD DATA PROVIDED BY THE~~
19 ~~DEPARTMENT UNDER SUBSECTION (E) OF THIS SECTION; AND~~

20 ~~(ii) THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA PROVIDED BY EACH~~
21 ~~PARTICIPATING INSTITUTION.~~

22 ~~(2) THE COMMISSION SHALL GENERATE A CUSTOMIZED LIST OF~~
23 ~~PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS FOR EACH ELIGIBLE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT THAT~~
24 ~~INCLUDES THE SPECIFIC PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS FROM WHICH THE STUDENT~~
25 ~~IS BEING OFFERED CONDITIONAL DIRECT ADMISSION IN THE COMMISSION'S~~
26 ~~FINANCIAL AID SYSTEM AND THE COMMON APPLICATION.~~

27 (G) THE PROVISIONS IN THIS SECTION DO NOT GUARANTEE A HIGH SCHOOL
28 STUDENT ELIGIBLE FOR DIRECT ADMISSION PLACEMENT IN ANY SPECIFIC
29 PROGRAM OFFERED BY THE PARTICIPATING INSTITUTION OR TO ANY SPECIFIC
30 COLLEGE, SCHOOL, OR FUNCTIONAL EQUIVALENT WITHIN THE PARTICIPATING
31 INSTITUTION TO WHICH THE STUDENT APPLIES.

32 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That:

1 (a) The Maryland Higher Education Commission, in collaboration with the State
 2 Department of Education, shall study and make recommendations on the administration
 3 of the direct admission program established under § 15–101.1 of the Education Article, as
 4 enacted by Section 1 of this Act.

5 (b) In conducting the study required under subsection (a) of this section, the
 6 Commission shall:

7 (1) identify the financial, technical, legal, and operational mechanisms
 8 needed to effectively implement the direct admission program;

9 (2) evaluate whether a system could be developed to integrate student
 10 academic data with financial aid eligibility data to provide simultaneous admission and
 11 affordability notifications to students; and

12 (3) create an implementation timeline for the direct admission program.

13 (c) On or before July 1, 2027, the Commission shall submit a final report of its
 14 findings and conclusions to the General Assembly, in accordance with § 2–1257 of the State
 15 Government Article.

16 SECTION ~~2~~ 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
 17 July 1, 2026. Section 2 of this Act shall remain effective for a period of 1 year and 1 month
 18 and, at the end of July 31, 2027, Section 2 of this Act, with no further action required by
 19 the General Assembly, shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.

Approved:

Governor.

President of the Senate.

Speaker of the House of Delegates.