



**Testimony to the House Appropriations Committee
HB 419 : Higher Education - Report on Collection Practices for Unpaid Fees and Services
Position: Favorable**

February 11, 2020

The Honorable Maggie McIntosh, Chair
House Appropriations Committee
Room 121, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Chair McIntosh and Members of the Committee:

The Towson University Student Government Association works hard to advocate on the students behalf. We are thankful to Delegate Luedtke for introducing this bill which will help to acquire useful data pertaining to Maryland Universities transcript withholding practices.

We are writing today in support of bill HB 419 which will require Maryland institutions of higher education to report on the withholding of transcripts and other information related to coursework due to a student's unpaid fees and services.

The Towson University Student Government Association Supports this bill because we believe that a student that has worked hard to earn their degree should not have all that work taken away because of financial hardships. This puts the students life on hold because they can't move forward in their education. There are many students here at towson that have not been allowed to register for classes because of holds on their accounts. We believe that this bill will give Universities the statistics to make an informed decision on how to better serve their needs.

Colleges use students' academic transcripts, grade reports, and diplomas as a debt collection tool to get students to fulfill their financial obligations to the university. These financial obligations include unpaid library fines, parking tickets, and tuition and fees. Many of these fines are for small amounts, under \$5,000.

When a school prevents a student from accessing their academic transcripts, they are also preventing a student from accessing financial aid and scholarships, internships, and job opportunities. Students are paying a high price-the loss of these opportunities-for a financial obligation that is relatively small.

Colleges' practice of transcript withholding needs to be part of our conversation on how we can further protect Maryland students pursuing higher education. In 2019, California signed into law AB 1313 prohibiting postsecondary schools from withholding students' transcripts as a debt collection tool.



Rather than prohibiting this practice, HB 419 seeks to understand the scope of the problem. HB 419 requires colleges and universities to collect information on the number of transcripts withheld, the amount owed by the college student, and the source of indebtedness. Armed with good data on the scope of this issue, policymakers can then consider appropriate measures to remedy the situation.

For all these reasons, we urge you to move favorably on HB 419.

Best,
Jordy Diaz
Director of Legislative Affairs