



A Union of Professionals
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**Written Testimony to the House Appropriations Committee
HB 419 - Higher Education - Report on Collection Practices for Unpaid Fees and Services
February 11, 2020**

SUPPORT

Chair McIntosh and members of the committee. On behalf of the 20,000 members of the American Federation of Teachers – Maryland (AFT-Maryland), we ask for a favorable report on HB 419 - Higher Education - Report on Collection Practices for Unpaid Fees and Services, which will require Maryland institutions of higher education to report on the withholding of transcripts and other information due to a student's unpaid fees and services.

Colleges use students' academic transcripts and diplomas as a debt collection tool 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.

When a school prevents a student from accessing their academic transcripts, they are also preventing a student from accessing financial aid, scholarships, internships, and job opportunities.

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 and the amount owed by the college student. With this data, policymakers can then consider appropriate measures to remedy the situation.

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

Mariette English
President