

# EQUITY FOR ALL KIDS



To: Chair McIntosh and members of the Appropriations Committee  
From: Shamoyia Gardiner, Education Policy Director  
Re: House Bill 719: Higher Education - Transfer Students - Courses Counting  
Toward Chosen Degree  
Date: February 25, 2020  
Position: Support

Students who attend community college and then transfer to a four-year institution of higher education are statistically less likely to attain a bachelor's degree than their peers who begin studying at that four-year institution. Nationally, only about 14-17% of community college transfers into four-year degree programs attain that degree within six years.<sup>1</sup> This figure varies widely by state, but disaggregation by socio-economic status yields an even more stark picture—just 34% of low-income students who transfer with the intent to complete a bachelor's actually succeed in that endeavor.

The cost of re-taking courses for which transfer credit was denied is uniquely prohibitive to students from economically disadvantaged circumstances. For students who choose to work while in school, the pressure of competing priorities creates incentive to "stop-out" (unenroll) for a semester or two, which often ends in failure to complete a course of study at all.

Eliminating the cost of re-taking courses for transfer students will mitigate this one massive barrier, yielding immediate benefits for the student, long-term benefits for the local economy, and potential long-term benefits for the institution of higher education, which will likely retain that student throughout their program and enjoy the tuition fees paid for higher-level courses.

Maryland, for all its relatively high national rankings, still has work to do to ensure that all students in post-secondary settings attain the degrees for the courses of study they begin. House Bill 719 is a necessary measure to support transfer students—low-income ones in particular—in getting to the finish line that is college degree attainment. The short-term, long-term, and intergenerational impacts of this policy change are far-reaching, intersectional, and serve as an investment in the current children, youth, families, and future workforce of this state. ACY strongly urges a favorable report on HB 719

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<sup>1</sup> Columbia University. *Tracking Transfer: New Measures of Institutional and State Effectiveness in Helping Community College Students Attain Bachelor's Degrees*. January 2016.