



Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

TESTIMONY

Submitted by
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SB 762 – Education – High School Graduation Requirements – Applications for Student Financial Aid

POSITION: Support

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges ("MACC") representing all of Maryland's 16 community colleges support SB 762 that requires high school students to complete and submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the Maryland State Financial Aid Application (MSFAA).

Community colleges thank Senator Lam for sponsoring this legislation that has the potential of giving numerous low-income students an opportunity to attend postsecondary education simply by making them aware that they are eligible for federal or state scholarship aid.

Community colleges know that the greatest barrier to education beyond high school is cost. Yet, numerous students are unaware that they qualify for financial aid. This is particularly true for many first-generation college going students. Community colleges became aware of the need to require students to file FASFA / MSFAA forms when working with the Maryland Community College Promise regulations.

With the Kirwan Commission recommendation calling for millions of more funding to prepare Maryland students to be first in the world, access to postsecondary education is vital. It is well documented that jobs of the future do not necessarily require a bachelor degree credential, but they do require postsecondary education and training beyond high school.

Background

Currently three states have passed laws that require high school seniors to fill out the FASFA as a graduation requirement:

- Louisiana was the first, with students filling out FAFSA applications starting in the fall of 2018. followed by Texas with Illinois recently becoming the third. Louisiana's requirement was done by action of their State Department of Education.
- Texas - passed a law that would mandate FAFSA participation this summer, will start implementing the policy during the 2021-2022 academic year.
- Illinois, which passed its law in August, will enforce the requirement next year

It is our understanding that Michigan, Indiana, California and the District of Columbia are also considering similar policies.

The laws allow for students to receive waivers by submitting paperwork with their local school district acknowledging that they understand what the FAFSA and state student aid options are and have decided not to fill out the form.

Louisiana, which was the first state to require students to submit a FAFSA, reports that over 77% of high school seniors completed the form, up from roughly 26% the year before, according to the National College Access Network. In addition, Louisiana reports that about 79% of their students that completed the FAFSA resulted in a higher high school graduation rate and a boost among those attending college after graduation.