



*Advocating better skills, jobs, and incomes*

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 1194:**

**Public Schools - Fees for Summer School Courses - Prohibition**

TO: Hon. Anne Kaiser, Chair, and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Christopher Dews, Policy Advocate

DATE: February 28th, 2020

The Job Opportunities Task Force (JOTF) is an independent, nonprofit organization that advocates for better jobs, skills training, and wages for low-income workers and job seekers in Maryland. We support House Bill 1194 as a means to increase investments in our youth by removing educational barriers for non-traditional students.

Education is vital in securing employment. Every year, thousands of Marylanders pay scores of money to colleges and universities to advance themselves into future careers. Since college costs have risen by 65% over the last 10 years, there is growing cultural controversy over whether or not attending university is worth it given the massive amounts of debt upon release. As the concern is primarily stationed around the idea that children should not be indebted for basic educational necessities, another population has gone overlooked; summer school students.

Right now, in the State of Maryland, children in grades K-12 have to pay an enrollment fee for entrance into specific summer school courses. The majority of public schooling is subsidized through taxes but certain school systems have found loopholes allowing them to charge grade-schoolers directly for summer school services even under certain ridiculous conditions. A student can be charged a fee if the student previously took the course, but did not successfully complete or receive credit- essentially being charged twice. It is unclear through reporting why certain students did not receive credit for the course but the idea of being charged twice can be egregious especially for children from lower-income households and people of color. They are also charged if the course is required for graduation which, of course, does not occur for any required class during the school year. The promoters of this current policy continue to make the case that the reason for the enrollment fees is that students often take courses out-of-district and are then not covered by district funding. However, further investigation revealed that students were being charged enrollment fees even while attending schools in their district.

House Bill 1194 would effectively end this practice by ensuring that students who attend a summer school in the local district, taking classes required for graduation, especially if the student took the course previously, are not charged a fee. This bill would open up educational services to those who are in the

# JOTF JOB OPPORTUNITIES TASK FORCE

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most vital growth period of their lives and is absolutely necessary for educational equity in the state of Maryland. For these reasons and more, we urge a favorable report.