



Larry Hogan  
Governor

Boyd K. Rutherford  
Lt. Governor

Andrew R. Smarick  
Chair

James D. Fielder, Jr., Ph. D.  
Secretary

**Bill Number:** Senate Bill 308

**Position:** Letter of Information

**Title:** Higher Education – Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship Eligibility

**Committee:** House Appropriations Committee

**Hearing Date:** April 1, 2021

### **Bill Summary:**

Senate Bill 308, as amended, alters the eligibility criteria for the Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship. Initial applicants that graduated from high school five or more years, before the date of the application is no longer required to meet the grade point average requirement for consideration of the scholarship.

### **Information:**

As amended, Senate Bill 308 removes the grade point average requirement for applicants that graduated from high school five or more years before the date of application. Therefore, the applicant is eligible for the scholarship if they meet all other eligibility requirements that include but are not limited to *income limits; in-state residency; enroll at a Maryland Community College; etc.* is eligible for the Promise Scholarship.

For the Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA) within the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) to identify this type of applicant the current application process must change. Currently, OSFA uses the FAFSA/MSFAA application as the primary application for the Promise Scholarship. If the applicant completes the FAFSA/MSFAA by March 1 *meets the income requirements; has not earned a bachelors or associate degree; and list a community college on their account, they are considered for the Promise Scholarship.* OSFA then assigns the initial Promise program to the applicant's account and by email notifies the applicant to submit either their high school/community college transcript or GED Examination by the deadline for further consideration of the award.

Senate Bill 308 would now require a supplemental application for the Promise Scholarship program be implemented in order to identify applicants that graduated from high school five or more years ago. An application is necessary because the FAFSA/MSFAA does not require the applicant to report the year they graduated from high school. Therefore, OSFA would be unable to continue solely using the FAFSA/MSFAA in order to identify this population of applicants. To ensure consistency within the program and reduce confusion to applicants, OSFA would not limit the application to just this population of applicants but require all initial applicants to complete the supplemental Promise Scholarship application.

Moreover, the OSFA will have to enhance the Maryland College Aid Processing System (MDCAPS) to allow initial applicants to apply for the Promise Scholarship. OSFA will need at least six to nine months to develop and implement the application in MDCAPS.

For further information, contact Ms. Donna Thomas, Director of the Office of Student Financial Assistance at: [donnae.thomas@maryland.gov](mailto:donnae.thomas@maryland.gov).