



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: House Bill 216 – Higher Education – Tuition Exemption for Foster Care Recipients and Homeless Youth – Alterations and Reports

SPONSOR: Delegate Valentine-Smith

HEARING DATE: February 3, 2021

COMMITTEE: Appropriations

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 216**, which provides technical corrections to the tuition waiver legislation passed in Maryland in 2014. The proposed legislation removes unnecessary and unintended barriers to implementation and student access, clarifies eligibility, adds prioritizations for access to housing and provides notification and appeal rights for students. These proposed improvements are in alignment with national best practice and will ensure that Maryland continues its strong commitment to provide viable educational pathways out of poverty and homelessness for youth who have disproportionately struggled to achieve college readiness.

While the existing State law was groundbreaking, lessons learned from the field since its passing have revealed certain limitations and constraints that impede full realization of the spirit and intent of the unanimously supported bipartisan legislation. Since its passage, Maryland has seen unintended consequences, leading to youth dropping out of school and unfortunately, returning to homelessness.

House Bill 216 seeks to remedy the unintended consequences of this much need legislation, by repealing the requirement of annual verification of homelessness; requiring each public institution of higher education in the state to make a tuition exemption application available to students and establish an appeal process for denials; granting priority for on-campus housing where applicable to tuition exemption recipients; and amending reporting requirements to allow for monitoring of eligibility determinations and appeals.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 216** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.