



BILL: Senate Bill 664 – Education – Student Financial Aid – Outreach Plan and Advisory Committee
DATE: April 1, 2021
POSITION: **Favorable with Amendments**
COMMITTEE: House Appropriations Committee
CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director

Senate Bill 664 directs each county board of education to encourage and assist certain high school students to complete and submit certain financial aid forms; it requires each county board to develop an outreach plan, provides for the contents of the plan, and requires that the plans are sent to MSDE, selected committees of the General Assembly, and a newly created advisory committee. The legislation also requires county boards to submit data regarding completion rates of the FAFSA and MSFAA forms. The bill directs MSDE, in coordination with the Maryland Higher Education Commission, to establish an advisory committee to provide guidance to county boards and high schools with information, resources, and best practices on universal FAFSA or MSFAA completion, and planning for financial aid for postsecondary education.

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), **supports Senate Bill 664 with two amendments.**

PSSAM appreciates the sponsor's collaboration with the stakeholders to amend this bill to remove the completion of a FAFSA as a mandatory graduation requirement. We recognize that financial aid applications are important for access to higher education, and that completion of these applications are strong indicators of college admission and success. The bill's mandated outreach plans mirror much of the current standards of practice for each of our school systems who currently provide assistance to students and families in maneuvering these applications. We look forward to further accelerating these efforts by participating on the new advisory committee and sharing and investigation best practices across the State. These efforts, along with the recent changes by Congress that expanded the eligibility for financial aid and dramatically simplified the FAFSA, will provide important momentum to increase competition rates for Maryland students.

PSSAM requests the following two amendments:

- The bill requires that all local school systems participate in the Maryland College Application Campaign (pg. 4, lines 28-29). About half of our 24 school systems do not participate in this program and have their own local processes, which will be outlined in the outreach report required by the bill. ***We request striking this mandatory participation.***

- The bill requires that local systems ***report data*** regarding the number students who did, and did not, complete the FAFSA (p. 6). Our student services directors are concerned about their ability to accurately produce this data. We are requesting language that ***requires this data collection and reporting “to the extent practicable.”*** This may also be an appropriate topic for the advisory committee to contemplate by investigating best practices and/or barriers to collecting this information.

Thank you for your consideration of these amendments, and for the reasons stated above, PSSAM **supports Senate Bill 664** and urges a **favorable with amendments** committee report.