



## HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

January 27, 2021

### TESTIMONY

Submitted by  
Dr. Maureen Murphy, President

#### SB308: Higher Education Maryland Community College Promise Program-Revisions

#### Position: Favorable

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While Maryland's College Promise has had a rocky start, it now provides a critical foundation to Maryland's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Originally, the 2018 Maryland Community College Promise program that called for an annual allocation of \$15 million to provide grants to full-time students attending one of Maryland's 16 community colleges. It was later expanded to include students in non-credit programs of study that lead to licensure or certification and registered apprenticeships. Initial participation was low due to unclear guidelines, but we have since learned better implementation strategies. Unfortunately, FY21 budget reductions left thousands of eligible Maryland students on a waiting list.

SB308 recognizes the reality of the Covid-19 pandemic on our most vulnerable populations. Lower-income, working adults, and student parents have been hit hardest, which forces them to make the difficult choice of stopping out or dropping out of college. Even more distressing is that many of those who have lost work during the pandemic are canceling their college plans altogether. Now, more than ever, these individuals who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own need what the Promise program can give them to help recover.

While the Governor's Budget has restored the original \$15 million allocation, this legislation, SB308, adds an additional \$3.5 million, a strategic investment in the road to recovery from the pandemic. Further, the elimination of the GPA requirement for those need-based students pursuing non-credit courses of study expands the eligibility for many unemployed adults who are unemployed due to the pandemic and need to be re-tooled in one of the many short-term training workforce programs that lead to licensure or certification. At the College of Southern Maryland, those programs include skilled trades and welding, high demand health careers such as Certified Nursing Assistant, commercial truck driving, and many more.

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This is a timely bill in that it expands the eligibility to many adults who find themselves unemployed through no fault of their own. For many of these individuals, their previous livelihoods will not be returning, and SB308 provides them with a lifeline. The powerful message of Maryland's College Promise program is that college is for everyone, that the State of Maryland supports the economic and social mobility of all its citizens. This message matters most to the students for whom college has not been an expectation.

As we emerge from this pandemic, we must continue to invest in our people if we are to see a full recovery from COVID-19. I urge you to support SB308 to expand the eligibility for a Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship for those most vulnerable individuals, who are unemployed or laid off through no fault of their own.