



**HEALTH CARE FOR THE HOMELESS TESTIMONY
IN SUPPORT OF
SB 155 - Higher Education - Tuition Exemption for Foster Care Recipients and
Homeless Youth - Alterations and Reports**

**Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
January 27, 2021**

Health Care for the Homeless supports SB 155, which would improve Maryland's tuition exemption for youth experiencing homelessness in order to provide access to higher education and a pathway out of poverty for talented Maryland students.

As Maryland's leading provider of integrated health services and supportive housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness, we serve the needs of the most vulnerable and underserved populations—including foster youth and homeless youth. Youth experiencing homelessness already face unique and oftentimes insurmountable barriers to basic health care. This bill will remove one more potential barrier and support these individuals who are obtaining something as fundamental as an education.

For reasons ranging from rejection due to sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, or disability, to exiting the foster care or juvenile justice systems without skills or resources needed to live independently, these individuals must be supported in pursuing an education. The state must take action and do what it can to support students going through hardships, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Education is critically important – please make sure students struggling with housing instability can access education. We urge you a favorable report on SB 155.

Health Care for the Homeless is Maryland's leading provider of integrated health services and supportive housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness. We work to prevent and end homelessness for vulnerable individuals and families by providing quality, integrated health care and promoting access to affordable housing and sustainable incomes through direct service, advocacy, and community engagement. We deliver integrated medical care, mental health services, state-certified addiction treatment, dental care, social services, and housing support services for over 10,000 Marylanders annually at sites in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. For more information, visit www.hchmd.org.