



## SB664 EDUCATION - HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS - APPLICATIONS FOR STUDENT FINANCIAL AID

February 25, 2021

EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

### OPPOSE

Jeanette Ortiz, Esq., Legislative & Policy Counsel (410.703.5352)

Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) opposes **SB664 Education - High School Graduation Requirements - Applications for Student Financial Aid**. This bill requires public high school students, beginning in the 2022-2023 school year, to confer with a high school guidance counselor or other designated representative regarding certain financial aid applications as a requirement for graduation. It authorizes a student or the parent/guardian to submit a letter to the county board to decline to confer. The bill authorizes a waiver under certain circumstances. The Maryland State Department of Education must adopt regulations to implement the requirements in the bill.

While we appreciate the innovation of this legislation, it infringes on local school system decision-making. AACPS opposes efforts by the General Assembly to encroach on local school system authority. The authority to establish graduation requirements is the domain of the State Board of Education and local school systems. Maintaining this authority with the State Board and local school systems allows for collaboration with the State and stakeholders to ensure that all students, schools, and school systems are held accountable.

AACPS makes great efforts to educate students and families about Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Our high schools host multiple events during the school year to provide information and assistance. Further, we are concerned that this bill negatively impacts the very student populations it seeks to help – those students who are in most need and could most benefit from financial aid to attend college. By requiring each student to meet with a high school guidance counselor or other designated representative regarding the FAFSA application a graduation requirement, the General Assembly would add another barrier to graduating.

There are many reasons why a student or a student's family may not be interested in filling out the FAFSA. For example, there are many students who will not attend college and instead will enter the workforce upon graduation. There are other students who do not qualify for financial aid and would be ineligible for any aid via the FAFSA.

To complete the FAFSA, a student needs to provide:

- a Social Security Number;
- an Alien Registration Number (if not a U.S. citizen);

- federal income tax returns, W-2s, and other records of money earned;
- bank statements and records of investments (if applicable);
- records of untaxed income (if applicable); and
- an FSA ID to sign in electronically.

A student who is a dependent will also need the above referenced information for the student's parent(s)/guardian(s). The FAFSA is filed electronically, so access to a computer and the internet is also necessary. In addition, this bill requires forced disclosure of personally identifiable information that belongs to the parent(s), but which would have to be shared with the school system. Students and parents may be obligated to show a completed FAFSA, which could result in disclosure of information that is in violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

While there is an opt-out provision in the proposed legislation, it puts the burden on the student or family to opt out. This legislation is too burdensome for students and families, especially for those students and families it seeks to help.

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report on SB664.