



**Board of Education of Howard County  
Testimony Submitted to the Maryland Senate,  
Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee  
March 18, 2021**

**Board of Education  
of Howard County**

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**HB0394: FAVORABLE W/AMENDMENTS  
Public Schools - Fees for Summer School Courses – Prohibition**

The Board of Education of Howard County (the Board) supports **HB0394 Public Schools - Fees for Summer School Courses - Prohibition** with amendments to address ambiguous language and logistical roadblocks to accomplishing the intent of the bill.

HCPSS offers summer programs to enable students to participate in interventions, take challenging courses at the elementary, middle, and high school levels to advance their studies, as well as an opportunity for students to recover credit. During a typical summer, approximately 50 students enroll in credit recovery courses, with a discounted tuition cost of \$50 per credit recovery course. Approximately 400 students retake an original credit course in which they did not earn credit at a cost of \$550 per course. Tuition reduction is applied automatically for students with an active Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS) status, with an application process for additional financial assistance.

As written, HB0394 is unclear on how a course for which a tuition waiver is required would be identified. Specifically, in Howard County, when students register for summer courses, it does not indicate if they have previously taken and/or received credit for the course or are first-time course takers. Additionally, as students have the option to take more courses than the number required for graduation, it would be difficult to distinguish when a summer school course fits the parameters of the bill as “credit for the course is a high school graduation requirement.”

To this end, suggested amendments include limiting payment for courses to credit recovery courses whose express purpose are to support students who have already taken, but did not earn credit in a course. The suggested amendment would only apply the waiver to students needing the credit to graduate imminently as there are other opportunities for students to recover credits throughout their academic career through existing programs. With these changes, HCPSS believes the language would more precisely meet the intent of the bill – to reduce barriers to graduation for students who find themselves in need of credits they previously attempted when nearing graduation.

In particular, the Board recommends adding “credit recovery” in line 16 on page 1, and “that summer” in line 2 on page 2, and striking lines 4 and 5 on page 2. The amended bill would read:

A LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM MAY NOT CHARGE A STUDENT A FEE FOR ENROLLMENT IN A CREDIT RECOVERY SUMMER SCHOOL COURSE IF:

(1) THE STUDENT ATTENDS A SCHOOL IN THE LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM; AND

(2) CREDIT FOR THE COURSE IS REQUIRED FOR GRADUATION THAT SUMMER FROM A HIGH SCHOOL IN THE LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM; ~~AND~~

~~(3) THE STUDENT PREVIOUSLY TOOK THE COURSE, BUT DID NOT SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETE OR RECEIVE CREDIT FOR THE COURSE.~~

Further, even with the narrowed focus under the above amendments, sufficient funding to cover the cost of the delivery of services by the local school system - similar to per pupil funding for the provision of traditional school services - should be covered under the bill. Summer courses are not required offerings, therefore the only way tuition waivers are feasible is through the collection of equivalent fees from our funding authorities. Without such funding, school systems will be forced to cut, or significantly reduce, other programming when making budgetary decisions.

For these reasons, we urge a FAVORABLE report of HB0394 from this Committee with the above amendments.