



EDUCATION, HEALTH & ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

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TESTIMONY

Submitted by

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Maryland Association of Community Colleges**

SB 664 – Education - High School Graduation Requirements - Application

Position: Support

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges representing all of Maryland's 16 community colleges fully supports SB 664, which would increase the viability of qualifying students to receive financial support for post-secondary education upon graduation from high school.

The State of Maryland's economic future is dependent on a well-educated, highly skilled workforce. Unfortunately, a significant portion of each year's high school graduating class are not able to begin the process of acquiring the education and skills necessary due to financial reasons. Yet, many of these students, would in fact qualify for either federal or state financial aid, if they were notified of their eligibility.

The gateway to establishing eligibility begins with the completion of the universal Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form. Again, a significant portion of graduating seniors do not, for a multitude of reasons, fill out FAFSA forms, despite the efforts of individual high schools offering activities to instruct students on the completion of FAFSA applications. These efforts are simply not reaching a significant portion of students.

Comparing the FAFSA completion rates for 2019 and 2020 indicates that most counties completion rates are between 50-60%. One or two counties are higher and some as low as 30-40% completion. Basically, we are not reaching many eligible students. Consider also that nationally last year \$2 Billion of PELL grants went unused. As a result, several states are moving toward legislation to require mandated FAFSA.

The General Assembly is to be congratulated for passage of Maryland's Promise program. However, the full impact of the Promise cannot be realized without inclusion of all eligible students. We simply must do better for all of our students.