



House Ways and Means Committee

Testimony: HB 96– Education – High School Graduation Requirements – Application

Testimony Submitted by: Dr. Kathleen Hetherington, President, Howard Community College

Position: Favorable

January 20, 2021

On behalf of Howard Community College and my colleagues at Maryland’s community colleges, I want to thank Delegate Solomon for sponsoring legislation that will increase the number of financial aid applicants among graduating high school seniors and assist them in qualifying for financial aid.

HB 96 would require mandatory filing of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the Maryland State Financial Aid Application (MSFAA) by high school seniors. Such a bill would allow students with financial need to establish eligibility for the Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship, as well as other federal, state, and local sources of aid.

Currently, three states have passed laws that require high school seniors to fill out the FAFSA as a graduation requirement:

- Louisiana, which was the first state to require students to submit a FAFSA, reports that over 77 percent of high school seniors completed the form, representing an almost 26 percent increase in the number of students filing the FAFSA compared to the prior year. In addition, there is a high correlation between the implementation of the policy and stronger postsecondary enrollment outcomes for seniors graduating in 2018 (Source: National College Access Network).
- Texas passed its law (<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/07/10/texas-becomes-second-state-require-fafsa-completion>), with implementation planned for the 2021-2022 academic year.
- Illinois passed its law in August 2019, which will be enforced next year.

Mandatory FAFSA legislation is now one of the fastest growing movements in college access policy. In 2020, there were three other states considering mandatory FAFSA requirements and in 2021, at least thirteen states are now considering legislation that will require mandatory FAFSA policies. The list of states are New York, Connecticut, New Jersey, Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, Oklahoma, Florida, Nebraska, California, Maryland and the District of Columbia.

Prospective community college students will have a pathway to success by having financial resources to pay for tuition, fees, and other educational expenses if they apply for financial aid. As an educator and former financial aid officer, I know that time and money are the two things that stand in the way of students completing their degrees. Now high school seniors in Maryland will be able to attend college and realize their educational dreams because they have completed the necessary financial aid forms to be considered for aid. The impact of an educated workforce's positive impact on Maryland's economy cannot be underestimated.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide support for this important legislation.