



**HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE
HOUSE BILL 96
Education - High School Graduation Requirements - Application
Favorable Report
Antoinette Coleman, Associate Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs
January 20, 2021**

Chair Kaiser, Vice Chair Washington and members Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify on House Bill 96. The bill requires public high school students, beginning in the 2022-2023 school year, as a requirement for graduation, to submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to the U.S. Department of Education or the Maryland State Financial Aid Application (MSFAA) to the Maryland Higher Education Commission. The USM supports the objectives outlined in House Bill 96 and looks forward to working with our secondary education partners to advance these goals.

Knowledge of financial aid—or lack thereof—is one of many hurdles high school students face in successfully pursuing postsecondary education. Perhaps the most important gateway for students to access financial aid is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the federal form required to receive Pell grants and student loans. In addition to federal aid, most states require the FAFSA to determine eligibility for state financial-aid programs, and many institutions ask students to file to receive institutional grants and scholarships.

College affordability is a top concern among lawmakers and university leaders alike. Following decades of rising college costs, a growing share of those costs being borne by students and their families, and with weak wage growth for much of the workforce, higher education has become more economically challenging than ever. Student financial aid can offset some of the costs families face, and the majority of all student financial aid is now delivered by the federal government.

The USM understands that the bill's sponsor has offered amendments to strengthen House Bill 96 and we are appreciative of the thoughtfulness of this legislation.

We urge a favorable report on House Bill 96.