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Baltimore City

Health and Government Operations
Committee

Chair

Government Operations and
Health Facilities Subcommittee

House Chair

Joint Committee on Administrative,
Executive, and Legislative Review



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Testimony of Delegate Samuel I. Rosenberg

Before the House Ways & Means Committee

In Support of

House Bill 96

Education – High School Graduation Requirements – Application

Madame Chair and Members of the Committee:

There is a stark difference in lifetime earning potential between bachelor's degree holders and those with a high school diploma. "The median earnings of those with a bachelor's degree were 57 percent higher than the earnings of high school completers (\$34,900)," according to Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics.¹

As we know, not every student is afforded the same opportunity to prepare for college. The skyrocketing cost of higher education is one reason students from lower-income families do not pursue higher education when compared to their wealthier peers.²

By completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, students can learn about financial assistance and how it might enable them to afford college.

House Bill 96 would require a student to complete either the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), or the Maryland State Financial Aid Application (MSFAA), prior to graduation from high school, beginning in the 2022-2023 school year.

There are exceptions to this requirement, which Delegate Solomon has outlined in greater detail.

¹ National Center for Education Statistics, "Income of young adults," <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=77>, date accessed January 18, 2021.

² "College for America, "Addressing the College Completion Gap Among Low-Income Students", <https://collegeforamerica.org/college-completion-low-income-students/>, June 2017.

The mandatory FAFSA requirement for high school students has proven effective in other states. Louisiana, the only state to fully implement a mandatory FAFSA policy thus far, considerably closed the FAFSA completion gap between high-income districts and low-income districts.³ In just one year, the gap closed from 8.5 percentage points to 1.1 percentage points.⁴ This is one step to close the long standing equity gap in education.

College may not be the best option for all students, but many could benefit from understanding the federal aid which they are eligible for, specifically students from low-income families or those who are first-generation college students.

I respectfully urge the Committee to act favorably on HB 96.

January 20, 2021

³The Century Foundation, “Should States Make the FAFSA Mandatory?”, <https://tcf.org/content/report/states-make-fafsa-mandatory/>, date accessed January 18, 2021.

⁴ *Id.*