



WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

January 20, 2021

TESTIMONY

Submitted by

**Dr. Bernard Sadusky, Executive Director
Maryland Association of Community Colleges**

HB0096 – Education - High School Graduation Requirements - Application

Position: Support

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges representing all of Maryland's 16 community colleges fully supports HB0096, 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.



CCBC
Community College
of Baltimore County

Sandra L. Kurtinitis, Ph.D.
President
443.840.1015
skurtinitis@ccbcmd.edu

CCBC Catonsville
800 South Rolling Road
Baltimore, Maryland
21228

CCBC Dundalk
7200 Sollers Point Road
Baltimore, Maryland
21222

CCBC Essex
7201 Rossville Boulevard
Baltimore, Maryland
21237

CCBC Hunt Valley
11101 McCormick Road
Suite 100
Hunt Valley, Maryland
21031

CCBC Owings Mills
10300 Grand Central Avenue
Owings Mills, Maryland
21117

**CCBC Randallstown
at The Liberty Center**
3637 Offutt Road
Randallstown, Maryland
21133

*The incredible value
of education.*

www.ccbcmd.edu

TESTIMONY

House Ways & Means Committee
January 20, 2021

Submitted by Dr. Sandra Kurtinitis
President, Community College of Baltimore County

HB 96 – Education – High School Graduation Requirements – Application

Position: Support

On behalf of the Community College of Baltimore County 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. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid, known as the FAFSA, is one of the most important forms used in awarding federal, state, and institutional financial aid.

Access to postsecondary education is one of the most critical policy goals facing our state as we begin the economic recovery process. The cost of attendance remains one of the largest barriers our students face. From my perspective, it is devastating to see a student spend 12 years preparing for college only to have the door closed due to failure to navigate the financial aid process accurately and in a timely manner. First Generation students especially are vulnerable to the complexities of navigating the financial aid process, missing crucial dates or simply not realizing the significance of filing the FAFSA.

There are currently 3 states that have mandatory FAFSA completion policies and there are another 13 states considering legislation as well as the District of Columbia. The goal is to not let students fall through the cracks and fundamentally change the culture of how students apply for financial assistance. By requiring FAFSA completion, states can guide students better through the process and not allow for students to miss crucial dates or simply not apply.

When Louisiana implemented their mandatory FAFSA completion policy, they were successful at correcting a long-standing disparity in FAFSA completion between high-poverty school districts and lower-poverty school districts. The gap, which was 8.5 percent was reduced to 1.1 percent in one year!

Consider Louisiana’s success as you look at the following table for Maryland’s FAFSA completion rates by district. As you can see, there are significant disparities in

Maryland's FAFSA completion rates. Students who live in Maryland should all be given an equal opportunity to afford college and not have it based on which county they live.

Table 1. FAFSA Completion by District

District Level	Completion Percentage
Howard County Public Schools	70-74
Montgomery County Public Schools	65-69
Baltimore County Public Schools	60-64
Carroll County Public Schools	60-64
Frederick County Public Schools	60-64
Kent County Public Schools	60-64
Queen Anne's County Public Schools	60-64
Worcester County Public Schools	60-64
Allegany County Public Schools	55-59
Baltimore City Public Schools	55-59
Calvert County Public Schools	55-59
Charles County Public Schools	55-59
Harford County Public Schools	55-59
Prince George's County Public Schools	55-59
Talbot County Public Schools	55-59
Wicomico County Public Schools	55-59
Anne Arundel County Public Schools	50-54
Caroline County Public Schools	50-54
Cecil County Public Schools	50-54
Garrett County Public Schools	50-54
St. Mary's County Public Schools	50-54
Washington County Public Schools	50-54
Dorchester County Public Schools	35-39
Somerset County Public Schools	35-39

Note: FAFSA Completion Percentage as of December 31, 2000

In conclusion, this legislation benefits all of Maryland. Every financial resource available to assist our students' path to postsecondary education that leads to degree completion or workforce skill enhancement is essential. This legislation will make a difference and I urge your favorable support for HB 96.