

**Maryland House of Delegates
Ways and Means Committee
Education - High School Graduation Requirements - Application– HB 0096
January 18, 2021 - SUPPORT**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the Montgomery County Council of PTA's (MCCPTA) for the 2021 legislative session. MCCPTA represents over 25,000 members from over 200 school communities. MCCPTA supports HB0096, Education - High School Graduation Requirements - Application. This bill will ensure that all students that qualify for financial aid will have an opportunity to access resources so that they may continue with their education after high school graduation.

Specifically, this bill requires each public school student to submit the FAFSA or the MSFAA as part of their graduation requirement. The bill also requires each student receives adequate support in completing and submitting the FAFSA or MSFAA. Students are not required to complete a financial aid form if:

- A student's parent or legal guardian declines to complete and submit the form;
- A student, who is 18 or older, declines to complete and submit the form; or
- A student who completes all other requirements for graduation and the principal attests that the student made a good faith effort to complete the FAFSA or MSFAA.

Completing the FAFSA is an important step towards expanding opportunities for Maryland students. Montgomery County Public School's reported FAFSA completion rate is approximately 5% below the rate from one year ago.¹ Requiring a good faith effort to complete financial aid forms in order to graduate will ensure that school systems will provide significant support and outreach to students that might forgo opportunities. For low-income students, FAFSA completion is associated with a 127% increase in immediate college enrollment.² The investment in time and effort in adding this graduation requirement will ensure that Maryland students will not miss out on millions of dollars in federal and state financial aid. By passing bill HB0096, lower income students in Montgomery County and Maryland will have more opportunities to continue their education, increase their earning potential, and achieve their dreams.

MCCPTA recommends a favorable report on HB0096.

Respectfully,

Laura Stewart
MCCPTA Vice President of Advocacy

¹ <https://studentaid.gov/data-center/student/application-volume/fafsa-completion-high-school>

² <https://www.ncan.org/page/NationalFAFSACompletionRatesforHighSchoolSeniorsandGraduates#:~:text=Using%20the%20most%20recent%20data,school%20graduates%20is%2061%20percent>