



HB 96 – Support The College Aid Equity Act

Ways and Means Committee

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Dear Chair Kaiser and Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

UMBC is in support of House Bill 96. As a public research university serving a student body of just over 25 percent first-generation and almost 30 percent Pell-eligible students, UMBC is committed to advancing college degree completion and socioeconomic mobility by welcoming and inspiring inquisitive minds from all backgrounds.

Creating the opportunity to educate every Maryland student as well as parents and guardians about the financial aid process and opportunities available would be life changing. Completion of the FAFSA can be intimidating for first-generation and low-income students and their families. However, it is a critical step for these students to enroll in college and reach degree completion. Completing the FAFSA will also become substantially simpler with the 2023 – 2024 FAFSA application, when the number of questions will be reduced from 108 to 33 questions.

We are encouraged to see language in the bill regarding waivers. This is critical to ensure a fail safe is in place to prevent additional road blocks for our neediest students whose parents are absent, disengaged, or simply unwilling to comply. In addition, the waivers will give needed flexibility for students who choose to begin their career right out of high school or opt for a future in the military.

Finally, our hope is that implementation of policy at the state level enables consistent support for students regardless of the county they live in or the high school they attend.

We urge a favorable report on HB 96.