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TESTIMONY IN **SUPPORT** OF Bill **HB142**, Bill Income Tax - Student Loan Debt Relief Tax
Credit - Alterations

Hearing Date: 1/28/2021

TO: Chair Kaiser and members of the House Ways and Means Committee

FROM: Hugo E. Cantu

Hello Chair Kaiser and members of the Ways and Means Committee, it is good to see you all again. Thank you Delegate Ivey for sponsoring this piece of legislation, I am urging a favorable report. I sit here before you as a Latinx alumnus from the University of Maryland School of Public Policy undergrad program, sitting on a mountain of debt. I sit here as a former intern in this very committee and a current Policy Analyst at the County level. I sit here as a son of immigrants that watched my immunocompromised mother earn every grade on her way to graduating Summa Cum Lade and becoming a nurse; only to be greeted at the door by a virus that could kill her.

For many years while my mom was in school studying, we struggled financially. My mother had to leave her \$15/hr job because they told her she couldn't get a raise and was not allowed to study and work for them because deep down she knew, education was the way out. For many other low-income individuals, going to college and leaving with a degree is the only way for upward mobility. If you are living in poverty and eventually graduate with a college degree, you have a [90 percent](#) chance of getting out of poverty. To give you a reference point where the inequalities are across demographics: the median wealth for white families has 41 times more wealth than the median wealth of black families ("Wealth Inequality"). When the

median wealth of Latino families are compared to median white families, the difference is 22 times more in favor of white families ("[Wealth Inequality](#)").

Speaking to a group of policymakers and decision-makers, I am well aware there is no easy fix or one size fits all. However, the increase of tax deductions related to student debt for those brave enough to get an education when everything is going against them, this bill can play a much-needed part in closing these inequalities. HB142 has the ability to help those who are attempting to push themselves out of a difficult situation by furthering their education without the fear of economic fallout. HB142 is not just for the recent young college grads that are struggling to find a job during the pandemic. What Delegate Ivey is proposing is financial relief for mothers, fathers, and people that know education is the way out and that the punishment for not obtaining a degree is far surpassing the reward for getting one. I urge a favorable report.