



## HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

January 20, 2021

### TESTIMONY

Submitted by  
Dr. Maureen Murphy, President

#### HB 96 – Education – High School Graduation Requirements – Application

#### Position: Favorable

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As the President of the College of Southern Maryland (CSM), I strongly support HB96 which facilitate college-going, and create opportunities for economic and social mobility among all Maryland high school graduates through their completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Many CSM students are the first in their families to attend college and may not have a full understanding of the financial assistance available to them. CSM's student population includes many first-generation college students who were not aware of their eligibility for financial aid. Completing the FAFSA while in their senior year of high school will make them aware of financial aid and scholarship resources that they currently aren't accessing. The completion and filing of these forms may provide life altering opportunity to many high school graduates through their pursuit of post secondary education for degree completion, licensure, and/or skill certification.

The wealth gap in Southern Maryland, and indeed most of Maryland, is significant, and has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 global pandemic. The poor and working poor struggle with employment, affordable housing, and food insecurity, and the pathway to a better life is not clear, and the prospect of attending college seems out of reach. Having all high school seniors file a FAFSA would enable economically-challenged students and their families to understand the financial resources available to them.

The benefits of mandatory FAFSA filing are many: it improved college affordability, it increases college-going rates among low-income students, and it promotes economic and social mobility. For those reasons, other states, most notably Louisiana, have enacted similar legislation. There is a proven high correlation between the implementation of policies like HB96 and stronger enrollment outcomes for graduating seniors.

HB96 could be a first step toward realizing a better future for many Marylanders, especially now as we try to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. Every student needs access to every possible resource to support the post-secondary experience leading to a better life.

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