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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB 1037

Higher Education – Senatorial and Delegate Scholarships – Qualifications and Limitations

Good afternoon, Madame Chair, Mr. Vice Chair and honorable members of the committee. Thank you for this opportunity to present **HB 1037, Higher Education – Senatorial and Delegate Scholarships – Qualifications and Limitations**. The purpose of this bill is to add clarity and transparency with respect to an extremely important constituent program—legislative scholarships. It assures the residents of each of our districts that these funds are available to them by requiring just that.

The bill makes these clarifications by prohibiting an applicant from applying for awards from multiple legislative districts, affirming that an initial application can only be made to the legislators representing the district of the applicant's primary residence and defines the circumstances under which certain exceptions can be made. I need to assure you that this bill is not before you because of any abuse of this program, but rather in the spirit of governmental transparency with respect to these funds. The current program is not changed by the bill; an applicant can still apply to each of its state legislators. If a student moves out of a delegate's district, they can apply to the original delegate for continuation, or submit an application to the delegate for the new district, but only one of that two options.

The addition of language regarding the provision of scholarship funds to members of the delegate or senator's family was to provide a safeguard against possible perceived abuse. Under this bill that would be allowed with the approval of the Speaker or President and notification to the Joint Ethics committee. This provision is again in the spirit of transparency.

When I was elected, I was not fully aware of the value of this scholarship program. In my 11 years of service, I personally have given about \$470,000 to hundreds of students from district 19. In this term alone, my district mates and I have provided over half a million dollars to those seeking higher education. I have to say that some of my most gratifying moments in this work has been my conversations with some of these beneficiaries. They are all extremely grateful and many tell me that they would not have been able to continue their education without these funds. Many of my recipients are the first in their families to go to college. I know that their families are proud of them and so am I.

I ask students to explain the reason for their applications. Their responses are compelling. Here are just a couple:

- This Scholarship would be life-changing because it would take away the night stress of thinking about how I am going to pay for my education. It would allow me to focus more on school and not work those overtime shifts to pay for it as I was doing before I lost my job during these hard times. This Delegate Scholarship will help not only me but also, my family who support me to keep pushing and to graduate college. As an Immigrant, no one from my family has yet graduated from college and I will become the first one to do so. My sisters during their time at Montgomery College struggled a lot that led them to drop out and get a job to pay their bills.
- As an aspiring nurse, it has always been my dream and greatest desire to assist those that are in need. Individuals that are in need of medical care are in one of the most vulnerable places that a person can be, as they are incapable of helping themselves. It is the ultimate act of giving to be able to help someone in such a situation. Regardless of financial or social status, all people share a common humanity and basic rights to good healthcare. I truly hope to see myself either working as a nurse in a hospital setting (preferably NICU) or continuing my education further towards DNP or something of the sort. While attending community college part time, I worked multiple jobs, full time, in order to cover those costs. Without this scholarship, it [would] be extremely difficult for me to attend nursing school and actualize my hopes of helping our world in this way, as I do not have sufficient funding at this time. This scholarship will open the way for me to fulfill my lifelong dream and passion. I hope to be able to spend the rest of my life giving to the world, and giving back so much that my family gained from the medical world at large.

Given how important these funds are to the families that we represent, it is essential that we make sure the funds are available to them. That is what this bill does and I am respectfully asking for your favorable report.