



Dr. Charlene Dukes
Interim President, Montgomery College
Testimony in Support of HB 598
Higher Education-Transfer Platform-Established (Transfer with Success Act 2.0)
House Appropriations Committee
February 22, 2022

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Charlene Dukes and I am the interim president of Montgomery College.

I ask you to adopt HB 598—Transfer with Success Act 2.0.

Over the last 75 years, thousands of MC alumni contributed to the Montgomery County of today like Morgan Wootten, an educator and legendary basketball coach, Sol Graham, a trailblazer and founder of Quality Biological, Inc., and Shruti Mistry, a biomedical engineer at the Food and Drug Administration.

As we look forward from our 75th anniversary, we must look intently at how the pandemic has disrupted the world—how these seismic social disruptions affect community college students.

Fewer students are enrolling at community colleges across Maryland and the nation, particularly low-income students, even though 80 percent of today's jobs require postsecondary education. The number of Pell Grant students at MC continues to drop while the rate of participation in the free and reduced meals program (FARMS) at Montgomery County Public Schools continues to hover at 33 percent. This is most troubling news given that three out of four jobs in Montgomery require a baccalaureate degree.

Now more than ever, we must do more to put that degree within the grasp of more Marylanders and attract community college students back to the talent pipeline.

Community college students, if given the opportunity to do so, can help put an end to the workforce shortages that plague Maryland, especially those exacerbated by the pandemic.

To do this, we must enhance access to four-year degrees for community college students.

Why? Again, because the data tells us so. Only, 11 percent of students from the lowest income quartile obtain a bachelor's degree within six years of graduation. The two plus two model is the affordable pathway for the residents of Maryland.

That is why I am grateful to Delegate Solomon for his dogged dedication to the removal of opportunity barriers for community college students.

For too many, that next big step up the opportunity ladder is out of reach.

Please join Delegate Solomon in focusing on solutions for our students and Maryland's workforce, not outdated institutional paradigms.

Yes, the 93 articulation agreements with Maryland public institutions open doors for MC students. However, those doors are often heavy. Pushing them open can be burdensome. Such agreements come with lots of fine print and details unique to each institution. These details create challenges for students to sort out and master all while completing their MC degree and filling out both admission and scholarship applications to get that next degree. Many are working and or raising a family, too.

That is why our faculty and staff recently created a Pre-Transfer Academy for students. The academy helps them navigate the bumpy transfer road—to sort out the details of the many institutional agreements, to use the technology platforms, to align their MC coursework accordingly, and hopefully to transfer with success.

HB 598 will help lighten those heavy doors—and help create the next generation of alumni like Morgan, Sol, and Shruti.

We ask you to speed our students to a degree and to the front lines of our economy. Please give HB 598 a favorable report.

Thank you.