



HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

House Bill 295

University System of Maryland – Student Withdrawal – Reimbursement of Tuition and Fees (Cameron Carden Act of 2023)

February 14th, 2023

Favorable

Chair Barnes, Vice-Chair Chang, and members of the House Appropriations Committee, on behalf of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County Student Government Association (UMBC SGA) Senate and Executive board, I am submitting this testimony requesting a favorable report on House Bill 295, the Cameron Carden Act of 2023.

House Bill 872 would simply require that each institution within the University System of Maryland (USM) adopt a policy that allows students to withdraw and receive reimbursement under certain extenuating circumstances such as illness, injury, hospitalization, or mental health and wellness.

The UMBC SGA Senate and Executive Board hold that both mental and physical wellness are essential to the success of our students. We believe students should not be forced to choose between their financial security and their mental health when pursuing their education. Unfortunately this was the choice that Cameron Carden and his family had to make when he was a student at Salisbury University. Students on any USM campus should not have to endure what Cameron Carden experienced and institutions of higher education should prioritize the wellness of students first and foremost. We believe that House Bill 872 would benefit the student body by establishing a consistent withdrawal policy across the USM and ensuring that mental health, in addition to physical health, is appropriately recognized as essential to student success and well-being.

Currently, there is no legal requirement that students at USM institutions be reimbursed for extenuating circumstances that impact their well-being. We believe that House Bill 295 will protect our students by creating a standardized, legal policy that ensures students who endure these extenuating circumstances do not have to add to their burdens by worrying about paying for classes that they were unable to complete.

Most, if not all, USM schools have policies in place that allow for reimbursed withdrawals based on physical illness; some universities have yet to do the same for mental health concerns. We recognize that UMBC correctly classifies mental health as an extenuating circumstance in our current withdrawal policy. However, without a legal requirement like the one proposed in House

Bill 295, there is no guarantee that the current policy would not be modified to exclude mental health and wellness as an extenuating circumstance that qualifies for reimbursement.

In summary, House Bill 295 protects the well-being of all students within the USM system by ensuring that they may withdraw under specifically defined extenuating circumstances. We hope that the members of this committee recognize the value of this bill to our students and we respectfully request a favorable report on this bill.

Thank you,
Zach Starr
Director of Government Affairs
UMBC SGA



About the UMBC SGA: *The University of Maryland, Baltimore County Student Government Association (UMBC SGA) is the voice of UMBC's undergraduate student community. SGA's purpose is to organize and support undergraduate students in creating distinctive community, co-curricular and academic experiences; identify and voice students' hopes and concerns; engage students in campus activities and decision-making; build mutually beneficial partnerships with individuals and organizations on and off campus and promote and defend students' welfare. <https://sga.umbc.edu/about/>*