

# KIPP Forward

March 10th, 2023

To Members of the Maryland House of Delegates:

**I am writing to advocate for and support HB 1129 outlining increases to the budget for the Maryland Higher Education Commission Outreach and College Access Program.** As a longtime member of KIPP Baltimore's College and Career Support Team, I write to advocate for the hundreds of students I support each year as they pursue their professional and personal goals.

I have worked in Maryland with college-enrolled students for eight years. In that time our organization has supported hundreds of students who receive funding from MHEC; for context, more than 80% of the KIPP alumni on my caseload are eligible for Pell grants. **The Maryland Higher Education Commission Outreach and College Access Program has been instrumental in giving Maryland students access to higher education,** while also providing a sustainable financial pathway to graduation. Programs like KIPP Forward are crucial in supporting students as they prepare for, gain admission to, and enter college: we work one-on-one with students, completing the FAFSA, discussing career options, securing housing and countless additional matriculation steps that happen before a student steps foot on campus. We do this in partnership with school-based counselors because we recognize their capacity is often diminished due to their many responsibilities. Once admitted, we continue to work with our students while they are on campus, and we are committed to serving them as they successfully persist to graduation - and beyond. Programs like ours are crucial in bridging the gap between our students' unlimited potential and the learning experiences that will serve their career goals; unless there is a broader shift to the paradigm of counseling services provided by public schools, many Maryland students will continue to rely on college/career access organizations like ours.

This funding is critical for students to persist in college to completion, achieve their higher education aspirations, and ultimately attain their unique career goals. The increase is critical to ensuring that the programs like ours can continue to support student access to the Maryland Higher Education Commission's (MHEC) state financial programs. Not only an investment in Maryland students, this funding is also an investment in the future of our state as an economic and workforce leader. **I support every effort to increase students' access to MHEC programs.** Our program has benefitted from MHEC grant funding, allowing us to do the most important work: *directly supporting students through (often-complex) federal and state financial programs and ultimately to earning a college degree.*

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me with further questions, to consult with KIPP Baltimore leadership, or to hear from my KIPP Forward colleagues.



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