



House Appropriations Committee

Testimony: SB 359 – Community College Tuition and Residency Waivers – Funding

Testimony by: Dr. Daria J. Willis, President, Howard Community College

Position: Support/Favorable

Submitted: February 15, 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony about Senate Bill 359. I appreciate Senator Guzzone sponsoring this important bill that would provide fiscal relief to Maryland's community colleges that collectively waive millions of dollars each year in state-mandated tuition and residency waivers.

While the waivers are a commendable effort, the unintended consequence is that they place a financial burden on community colleges, which then must make up their loss in other ways. All too often, the result is increased costs and an impact on other students not covered by waivers. In the fall 2022 semester, 47% of HCC credit students received financial aid, and 52% of those students are at or below the poverty line.

With the Howard Community College (HCC) enrollment standing at nearly 23,000 credit and noncredit students annually, the cost of state-mandated waivers is staggering if you consider every waiver offered. HCC loses approximately \$1.77 million each year from all its tuition and residency waivers combined. This is funding that could be used instead for wraparound services to support students through graduation.

SB 359 would help offset costs of waivers such as those for senior citizens. After removing dual enrollment and employee waivers, 25% of the remaining credit waivers at HCC are used by senior citizens and 85% of noncredit course waivers go to seniors. For fiscal year 2022, the total cost of senior waivers at HCC amounted to more than a quarter-million dollars -- \$256,325 – just for seniors alone.

I commend Senator Guzzone and his Howard County colleague Delegate Feldmark for working diligently over the past few years to pass this bill. They understand that Howard Community College is just one of 16 Maryland community colleges that face the financial burden of tuition and residency waivers year after year. Community colleges must have your financial support to cover the costs of state-mandated waivers.

By supporting community colleges through SB 359, the General Assembly will ensure its community colleges are kept fiscally whole and that residents have the quality, affordable, locally provided higher education that the great State of Maryland deserves.

Please vote favorable for SB 359 to support your community colleges.