

HB295_USM_FAV_SENATE EEE.pdf

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Position: FAV



UNIVERSITY SYSTEM *of* MARYLAND

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
House Bill 295
Public Institutions of Higher Education – Student Withdrawal Policy –
Reimbursement of Tuition and Fees
March 22, 2023
Favorable

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and committee members, House Bill 295 requires each public institution of higher education to adopt a policy authorizing students to withdraw for extenuating circumstances such as illness, injury, hospitalization and mental health and wellness. The bill was amended in the House and the University System of Maryland (USM) supports the bill before the committee today.

University System of Maryland institutions work closely with students experiencing challenges with physical and mental health to help them complete their studies or return to campus after a hiatus. Presently, each USM institution has specific policies and processes to support these students.

One commonality is that withdrawal policies begin with the first day of instruction and the failure to attend the university or attend classes does not change this policy. Institutions and students must consider the implications of withdrawal for the purposes of the return of federal financial *or Return of Title IV funds (R2T4)*. For the student, the percentage of funds returned decrease in the first three weeks of a semester. The funds schedule may vary campus-to-campus, but generally, students can expect a 90% refund in the 1st week; 50% in the second week; and 25% in the 3rd week. Regardless, students receiving Title IV federal financial aid must complete exit counseling as a condition of their loan agreement. That process begins here: <https://studentaid.gov/exit-counseling/> Beyond that timeframe, our focus is to work with students so that they may complete the course successfully.

At one USM institution in 2021, the Exception to Enrollment Policy received approximately 200 applications. The school approved 33% of them. In many cases, the student was able to receive a W grade, which allowed them to withdraw from a course instead of failing. Further, for extenuating circumstances in which the student's verified last date of attendance/participation in the course was during the published refund period, in addition to the retroactive enrollment adjustment (i.e. grade change from F to W), the student would be refunded accordingly.

Thank you for allowing the USM to share our position on House Bill 295.



About the University System of Maryland

The University System of Maryland (USM)—one system made up of twelve institutions, three regional centers, and a central office—awards eight out of every ten bachelor's degrees in the State of Maryland. The USM is governed by a Board of Regents, comprised of twenty-one members from diverse professional and personal backgrounds. The chancellor, Dr. Jay Perman, oversees and manages the operations of USM. However, each constituent institution is run by its own president who has authority over that university. Each of USM's 12 institutions has a distinct and unique approach to the mission of educating students and promoting the economic, intellectual, and cultural growth of its surrounding community. These institutions are located throughout the state, from western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, with the flagship campus in the Washington suburbs. The USM includes Historically Black Colleges and Universities, comprehensive institutions, research universities, and the country's largest public online institution.

USM Office of Government Relations - Patrick Hogan: phogan@usmd.edu

HB295CarolineThorneSGA_fav (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Caroline Thorne

Position: FAV

Committee: Senate Education, Energy and Environment

Testimony on: HB295 - University System of Maryland - Student Withdrawal - Reimbursement of Tuition and Fees (Cameron Carden Act of 2023)

Position: Favorable

21 March 2023

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and the members of the EEE Committee,

The University of Maryland – College Park, Student Government Association supports HB295 that allows students to safely and efficiently withdraw from universities within Maryland’s educational system under certain extenuating circumstances that pose a threat to the student’s physical or mental well-being.

My name is Caroline Thorne, and I serve as the Director of Government Affairs for the University of Maryland’s Student Government Association. On behalf of our SGA, I respectfully request a favorable report of House Bill 295, the Cameron Carden Act of 2023 to ensure students in extenuating circumstances are able to withdraw from university and receive reimbursement for their tuition and fees.

College students today juggle an array of challenges. Other than the typical stressors of coursework, navigating relationships, and being away from home often for the first time, students today have navigated forms of loss related to the COVID-19 pandemic, mass violence, war, economic strain, social injustice on a national scale, and much more. Student mental health is worsening.

Many institutions already have allowances for withdrawing due to physical injury, illness or hospitalization, but mental health crises are not included in these policies. This bill would ensure that mental health is treated just as importantly as physical health. It would also ensure students aren’t financially punished for taking care of their health, by requiring reimbursement be made for students needing to withdraw.

I respectfully request a favorable report on HB295.

Thank you,



*Caroline Thorne,
Student Government Association Director of Government Affairs
University of Maryland — College Park,
cthorne@terpmail.umd.edu*

HB295 Senate Witness Testimony_3.21.23.pdf

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Position: FAV



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 21, 2023

Chair Brian J. Feldman
Vice Chair Cheryl C. Kagan
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

Thank you for considering HB295 University System of Maryland – Student Withdrawal – Reimbursement of Tuition and Fees (The Cameron Carden Act of 2023). This bill will allow students to safely and efficiently withdraw from universities within Maryland’s educational system under certain extenuating circumstances that pose a threat to the student’s physical or mental well-being.

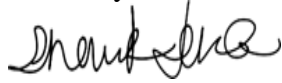
I am reintroducing this bill with amendments that were aligned to through the 2022 Session. Currently, the state of Maryland has no standard requirement of reimbursement for students needing to withdraw based upon health restrictions. Each institution is free to construct its own policies, and many have allowances for withdrawal for reasons of physical injury, illness, or hospitalization. While I commend individual institutions for making these policies, HB295 will help to standardize these policies across our state university system and ensure that mental health and wellness is an acceptable rationale for withdrawal.

No student should have to decide between receiving the care they need and losing thousands of dollars. This was the decision faced by Cameron Carden. Because of racially charged events on campus generally, and personally being a target of racism, Cameron’s mental health began to suffer. Not wanting to lose his tuition money, Cameron attempted to persevere in his classes. His family noticed changes in his behavior and demeanor and encouraged him to withdraw to support his mental wellbeing. Despite these circumstances, Cameron received no reimbursements for the semester due to his inability to meet the time constraints the university had imposed.

Unfortunately, we cannot fully know how many students share Cameron’s experience or feel they must suffer through mental health challenges because of the financial consequences of

withdrawal. This bill ensures that policies are standardized, and that mental health is an acceptable rationale for withdrawal. I urge a favorable report on HB295.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shaneka Henson', written in a cursive style.

Delegate Shaneka Henson

HB295NelsonChenSGA_fav.pdf

Uploaded by: Nelson Chen

Position: FAV

Committee: Senate Education, Energy and Environment

Testimony on: HB295 - University System of Maryland - Student Withdrawal - Reimbursement of Tuition and Fees (Cameron Carden Act of 2023)

Position: Favorable

21 March 2023

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and the members of the EEE Committee,

The University of Maryland – College Park, Student Government Association supports HB295 that allows students to safely and efficiently withdraw from universities within Maryland’s educational system under certain extenuating circumstances that pose a threat to the student’s physical or mental well-being.

My name is Nelson Chen, and I serve as one of two Arts and Humanities Representatives for the University of Maryland’s Student Government Association. As you may know, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated a root issue in American society: the mental health crisis. Statistics reported millions of physical casualties, and the new coronavirus variant was to blame. However, this was more than a physical war; the war on America's mental health remained hidden under stigmas and a lack of sensitivity. I firmly believe this is an issue that permeates all aspects of American life, including the lives of students in universities.

I entered university during the pandemic, and the risk of COVID-19 combined with news of deaths increasing by the day led to my mental health deteriorating. I faced depression my first year of college, and I felt alone as I stared at a screen to attend my classes. This is the reality of many American college students who enrolled during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the lasting effects of the mental health crisis are still felt today. The COVID-19 pandemic has imposed many financial burdens on families as well. Knowing how much my family was paying for a first-generation college student like me to attend college, I felt the pressure to succeed during a time when my mental health was at an all-time low. The financial difficulties stacked onto my mental health illness, and I became scared to fail.

Yes, I recognize we are in a post-COVID-19 pandemic world. However, the lasting legacy of the mental health crisis is another stressor to those who have extenuating circumstances regarding physical or mental health well-being. The ability to withdraw from Maryland universities while being fully reimbursed for that semester is a must if Maryland recognizes the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on our youth. Maryland must align itself with decisions that reflect values of a more just, equitable, and accessible education for all.

I respectfully request a favorable report on HB295.

Thank you,



*Nelson Chen, Student Government Association, Arts and Humanities Representative
University of Maryland — College Park,
nchen129@terpmail.umd.edu*