

**House Appropriations Committee
Testimony by
Dr. Brad Phillips, Executive Director
February 13, 2024**

**HB 539 - Public Institutions of Higher Education - Student Withdrawal Policy -
Reimbursement of Tuition and Fees (Cameron Carden Act of 2024)**

Position: Favorable with Amendments

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC), representing Maryland's 16 community colleges, supports **HB 539** with amendments. This bill would require colleges to reimburse tuition and fees for a student if specified extenuating circumstances inhibit the student's ability to continue their education. MACC supports the intention behind the proposed legislation and is proud of how our institutions work directly with students experiencing physical or mental health challenges.

It is worth noting that Maryland's community colleges serve a large portion of the State's Pell Grant recipients. These recipients who withdraw under this bill may face repayment obligations if they fail to complete a certain number of credits or withdraw before completing 60% of the semester. This could result in serious unexpected financial burdens for already financially vulnerable students and such repayment obligations could exacerbate financial strain and potentially deter students from persisting in their education.

It is extremely important for all students to carefully consider the implications of withdrawing from classes and to consult with their financial aid office before making any final decisions. In many cases, there may be alternative options available, such as incompletes or academic appeals, that can help mitigate the impact on financial aid eligibility.

Maryland's community colleges understand the importance of supporting students in times of need and have policies in place to ensure students with extenuating circumstances stay on the path to success. Thank you for allowing MACC to submit testimony on **HB 539**.