



**TESTIMONY FOR SB0637
Higher Education - Undocumented Students
Out-of-State Tuition Exemption Eligibility**

Bill Sponsor: Senators Brooks and Hettleman

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Aileen Alex, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0637 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists, and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

Young people who were brought to the U.S. by their parents and have worked hard in school with the hope of going to college may discover that they face insurmountable obstacles. They are not eligible for federal financial aid even though the average income of their parents is low. Students who have to pay out-of-state tuition find the situation prohibitive. Or they might need to work full-time throughout their college careers, perhaps skipping quarters or semesters due to financial constraints.

Qualifying more of these students sooner for in-state tuition increases the success rate for these students. SB0637 allows an individual or the individual's parent or guardian to qualify for in-state after filing just one year of Maryland income taxes, reduced from 3 years.

Experience in the states that have adopted tuition equity laws or policies suggests that such policies help U.S. citizens and immigrants of all statuses, by reducing the high school drop-out rates, increasing the number of graduates who pursue a college degree, raising student incomes and tax contributions, and yielding an array of other economic and social benefits. Moreover, allowing students into this process can help build civic engagement and prepare students for the world that awaits them once they leave school. SB0637 has the potential of helping a student become a lifelong committed and high-information voter.

Maryland is a state that is very welcoming to immigrants, who help support our economy and pay into our tax base. It is only fair that we make our benefits accessible to those people who are residents but not yet citizens.

We support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.