

Testimony in support of SB 455 (1).pdf

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Position: FAV



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony in Support of SB 455 College Preparatory Programs and College Admissions
Applications - Fees - Prohibition**

Too many students in our state struggle to create a clear path to quality higher education, often barred by financial barriers that have no place in our great state. Far too many Black and brown students are unable to properly plan for their future, challenge themselves academically, and gain highly beneficial college credits. Furthermore, many low-income or financially insecure students are unable to apply to a wider range of institutions because of the high cost of applications. This bill would help thousands of students be better ready for college, and for our state to reach the education standard we aim to achieve.

Various studies have shown the benefits of taking college preparatory classes, with participating students increasing their chances to get into more prestigious institutions, being more likely to return for a second year of college, and more likely to be better prepared for college-level classes and have a better idea of the major they want to pursue. For example, when Reed College dropped its application fees, the number of applications among the lowest economic quartile increased by 40%. The goal of the institution in this case was to attract more students over the long term and it stands by its decision to do so a few years later. An abolishment of application fees has consistently seen a rise in first-generation students attending the university.

To help promote the accessibility to schools, and improve the equity of school opportunities, I propose SB 455, which will prohibit the charging of fees regarding advanced college preparatory programs such as AP or IB classes and abolish application fees for in-state students. The average AP and IB exams cost \$98 and \$135, respectively, so these prohibitive costs must be addressed to help Black and brown students with their educational career paths. Most of the funding will come from local counties, Maryland Blueprint funding, and university revenues.

We must do our best to support our students and improve access to education and social mobility in our state. As legislators, we must improve the opportunities of our constituents and push our state to the highest quality and access to education possible.

Therefore, I respectfully request a favorable committee report on SB 455.

SB455_MSEA_Lamb_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Lauren Lamb

Position: FAV

FAVORABLE
Senate Bill 455
College Preparatory Programs and College Admissions Applications – Fees -
Prohibition

Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment
February 14, 2024

Lauren Lamb
Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 455, which would prohibiting a county board from charging fees to certain students for their participation in an International Baccalaureate Diploma Program or a comparable Advanced Placement coursework. It would also prohibit public colleges and universities in the State from charging a Maryland public high school graduate fees related to a college admissions application.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

All students should have the opportunity to take challenging coursework that engages their interests and prepares them for their future pursuits. This bill would ensure that all students, regardless of family income or college and career readiness status, can take advantage of college preparation courses without facing financial barriers.

It would also rightly ensure that Maryland colleges and universities are not charging in-state high school graduates fees to apply. College application fees are an inequitable practice and are increasingly understood as contributing to overwhelming, costly application processes that discourage prospective students.¹ Eliminating such fees is a step to help ensure that all Maryland students can pursue their postsecondary goals.

We urge the committee to issue a Favorable Report on Senate Bill 455.

¹ Small Nudges Can Improve How Students Apply to College. Harvard Business Review (2016). <https://hbr.org/2016/11/small-nudges-can-improve-how-students-apply-to-college>

SB 455 College Prep Programs and Applications USM

Uploaded by: Candace Caraco

Position: FWA



Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Senate Bill 455
College Preparatory Programs and College Admissions Applications – Fees –
Prohibition
Wednesday, February 14, 2024
Favorable with Amendment

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on Senate Bill 455. The bill would make certain college preparatory programs free, and it also prohibits Maryland public institutions of higher education from charging Maryland high school graduates any fees associated with college admission applications. The University System of Maryland (USM) supports the bill's intention to make college applications affordable for everyone; indeed, USM institutions provide a fee waiver process so that low-income students do not have to pay for our college applications. But many tens of thousands of applicants can afford application fees, and the fiscal impact of this bill—in the millions of dollars—is prohibitive for our institutions. The USM suggests an amendment to encourage the promotion of the fee waiver process in place of prohibiting application fees.

The USM is comprised of twelve distinguished institutions, and three regional higher education centers. We award eight out of every ten bachelor's degrees in the State. 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 three Historically Black Institutions, comprehensive and research universities, and the country's largest public online institution.

The USM strategic plan, *Vision 2030*, has a goal to have the students of the USM reflect the full diversity of the state. As this committee has heard described, our institutions engage in considerable outreach to engage young people from under-resourced communities in various ways so that they are encouraged to pursue higher education. Once students are admitted, our institutions work hard to provide need-based aid, and over half of all students leave with no debt. The USM has a genuine commitment to access.

With that in mind, our institutions offer fee waivers to students who are low income. Several USM institutions use the Common Application, and it, too, has a fee waiver option. But our institutions cannot afford to make the application free for every Maryland applicant coming out of high school. The University of Maryland, College Park alone anticipates the cost of such a change to be over \$2 million (it received over 60,000 applications). The cost for the USM as a whole would be considerably more than that. At a time when our institutions are doing their best to keep down costs, this bill would force cuts or an increase in other costs that could impact all students.

We believe a better approach would be to enhance the visibility and transparency of the fee waiver process. The USM can provide high school guidance counselors and families with a web page that would link to each member institution's fee waiver process. The USM office could provide such a page for all of its institutions, unless MHEC would prefer to host such a page for all institutions.

We therefore recommend amending Section 15-101 by striking the current paragraph (c), lines 18-20, and replacing those lines with "A PUBLIC INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION SHALL HAVE AN APPLICATION FEE WAIVER PROCESS FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE LOW-INCOME AS DEFINED BY PELL ELIGIBILITY OR ANOTHER METRIC THE INSTITUTION SHALL DEFINE. THIS PROCESS WILL BE POSTED ON ITS WEBSITE. THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND SHALL ALSO HAVE A SINGLE WEB PAGE THAT PROVIDES LINKS TO ITS MEMBER INSTITUTIONS' FEE WAIVER WEB PAGES."

Thank you for allowing the USM to share our position on Senate Bill 455.



SMCM SB455 INFO Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Brandon Engle

Position: INFO

Senate Bill 455
College Preparatory Programs & College Admissions Applications – Fees – Prohibition
Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee
February 14, 2024

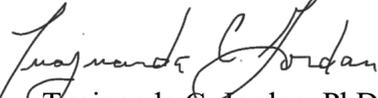
Letter of Information

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share St. Mary's College of Maryland's analysis of Senate Bill 455. In general, this bill prohibits a county board from charging a student (or their parents) any fee related to the enrollment in, or completion of, the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program or comparable Advanced Placement courses. The bill also prohibits public colleges and universities in the state of Maryland from charging any fee associated with an application for admission.

As the state's designated public honors college, St. Mary's College of Maryland offers a premier liberal arts education that is both affordable and accessible for academically talented students from a broad spectrum of socioeconomic, ethnic, and racial backgrounds. Although the College does charge a \$50 application fee, the Office of Admission participates in the Common Application's comprehensive fee waiver program for students depending on their income or participation in local, state, or federal programs for low-income students. The College also independently offers a significant number of fee waivers to students from a variety of backgrounds – including first-generation students, active duty service members or veterans, low-income students who do not apply through the Common Application, as well as participants in on-campus recruitment events – in order to incentivize their application to the College. For the Fall 2023 application cohort, 40.3% of application fees were waived; similarly, 41.6% of application fees have been waived to date for the Fall 2024 application cohort.

Consistent with our mission, St. Mary's College of Maryland remains supportive of state-wide initiatives to expand access to higher education for Maryland students. However, Committee members should note that the prohibition of application fees would result in a significant loss in annual revenue which supports College recruitment activities; additionally, if the elimination of application fees leads to a significant increase in applications from students who are not a good fit for the College, operational impacts to the Office of Admission would similarly increase.

St. Mary's College of Maryland remains committed to offering a premier liberal arts education that is both affordable and accessible to a broad spectrum of Maryland students. Thank you for your consideration and continued support of St. Mary's College of Maryland.


Tuajuanda C. Jordan, PhD
President