



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB637
Higher Education – Undocumented Students – Out of State Tuition
Exemption Eligibility

Dear Honorable Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and Members of the Committee,

I would like to first thank you for your time and consideration in hearing my support for SB637. I am a proud resident of District 17, the Maryland Youth Organizer of United We Dream, nation's largest immigrant youth led network, and a beneficiary of the Maryland Dream Act. With over 11,330 members in Montgomery County alone, I work directly with affiliated school organizations in multiple high schools and universities across Maryland including Gaithersburg High School Sabor Latino, Students FAIR in Poolesville and Seneca Valley, Morgan State University Undocubear and Montgomery College's Raptors for Immigrant Rights. Students in our networks come from all walks of life, and immigration statuses. Many undocumented students of which go to Maryland schools, graduate with the hopes and dreams of going to college just to be told they wouldn't qualify for in-state tuition due to the requirements of three years worth of income taxes from their parents/guardians. There are many instances where our youth came as unaccompanied minors a couple years ago so they aren't able to get the years of tax proof needed, or traveled from different states due to cruel and unjust immigration laws in states like Florida and Texas. When I think about my youth who's stories could be told in these halls, I think about the opportunities they lose because they don't mark one check mark of the requirements needed for the MD Dream Act.

As an undocumented high schooler trying to navigate the higher education system there were no resources available for me to achieve my dreams of going to college. I was afraid of my next step after high school, it wasn't until my ESOL coordinator Maria Garcia told me about the Maryland Dream Act. It allowed students like me an opportunity to pay in-state tuition at Montgomery College at the time. Through that I went to Montgomery College debt free and was able to get a full ride at Trinity Washington University where I graduated in 2021 with 2 degrees in Political Science and Sociology with a minor in Education. Despite everything I went through as a student and the issues I faced due to my immigration status, I received my Masters from Georgetown University last year. All to say, my educational journey wouldn't have reached where it has gone without the Maryland Dream Act. It changed my life, and SB637 will change many others by opening doors for so many more undocumented students all across the beautiful state of Maryland. It'll create a wave of new ideas, leaders and innovators in our society. For these reasons, I ask for a FAVORABLE REPORT on SB637.