



EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Senate Bill 637

Higher Education - Undocumented Students - Out-of-State Tuition Exemption Eligibility

February 28, 2024

Favorable

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on Senate Bill 637. The bill decreases the number of years that a student or the student's parents must pay for the student to receive an out-of-state tuition exemption. The University System of Maryland (USM) supports the change to the law.

The USM comprises twelve distinguished institutions, and three regional higher education centers. We award eight out of every ten bachelor's degrees in the State. Each of the 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.

This change to the law will bring "undocumented" students' requirements for demonstrating exemption eligibility in line with what the USM requires for students who may be eligible for residency when they have to petition to demonstrate their eligibility. Those students must provide evidence of having been living in Maryland and paying Maryland taxes for the year preceding their enrollment. Now undocumented will only have to provide one year of taxes as well. This change will lighten the burden on a population of students who pursue a college education at lower rates than other students and who already face many barriers to college. We support taking this action to lighten their burden.

It is also important to Maryland's future that this growing group of students play a bigger part in becoming part of Maryland's highly educated workforce. Maryland needs a college-educated workforce for many of its employment sectors where there are shortages. Maryland not only serves these students with this change in the law, but it also serves its own longer-term interests.

Thank you for allowing the USM to share our position on Senate Bill 637.

