

**SB 567 - Carden Act.pdf**

Uploaded by: C. Anthony Muse

Position: FAV

# Support

**HB 539 | SB 567**

## The Cameron Carden Act

The Cameron Carden Act amends existing university policies to include mental health crises alongside physical injuries for student withdrawal and reimbursement.



### WITHDRAWAL POLICY:

The bill requires each public institution of higher education in Maryland to adopt a policy allowing students to withdraw under certain circumstances, including mental health crises.

### EQUALITY FOR MENTAL HEALTH:

The Cameron Carden Act ensures that students experiencing mental health challenges receive the same support and consideration as those with physical health issues.

### WHAT INSPIRED THE CAMERON CARDEN ACT?

The bill is named after Cameron Carden, a college student who faced racial discrimination and mental health struggles on campus. His story highlights the urgent need for improved mental health support in higher education.

### HOW DOES THE BILL BENEFIT STUDENTS?

The Cameron Carden Act provides a safety net for students facing mental health crises, offering them the opportunity to prioritize their well-being without fear of financial repercussions.

READ BILL HERE



CAMERON CARDEN'S STORY



SPONSORED BY:

DELEGATE SHANEKA HENSON DISTRICT 30A  
SENATOR ANTHONY MUSE DISTRICT 26

# **SB567\_Cameron-Carden.pdf**

Uploaded by: Cameron Carden

Position: FAV

Good Afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I applied to Salisbury University on the recommendation of my football coach at Western New England University. He said it would do me good to return to my home state of Maryland, and he specifically praised the academic culture at Salisbury. And he was right: as I made clear during the appeals process and since, I enjoyed being at Salisbury University. The professors were engaging and attentive to student needs, and the campus felt like a safe, supportive place to learn - until, of course, it suddenly ceased to.

When racist graffiti appeared in the liberal arts building, the first thing that entered my head was not "who could have done this?" as you might expect. As a young black man, I'm no stranger to confronting racist comments and threats, even in our schools. In the weeks leading up to the graffiti, groups of students would yell out the n-word in common areas, something I've grown accustomed to ignoring.

So, when the graffiti escalated to the point of threatening another Sandy Hook massacre, I - and any black student reading that graffiti - knew the answer to "who could have done this?", and it's terrifying. Anybody could have done it, including people with whom they take classes and share a living space.

The next question a person asks himself in that position is, "is this just an idle threat or could they actually act on it?" And, unfortunately, we all know the answer. They absolutely can - as someone who remembers Virginia Tech knows all too well. So you have someone who is targeting black people and promising the very real possibility of a massacre, where you attend school, and you're somehow supposed to focus on your studies.

To be clear, I tried to focus on my studies. I tried to reach out and seek help. But my concerns over my own safety were all-encompassing and made it impossible to function. This was no different than if I had suffered a debilitating physical injury: with every fiber in my being I wanted to continue my education, but it was simply impossible to accomplish.

When my story made the news, the main focus was on how unresponsive the University administration was at first. For my purposes, the faculty who I spoke to about my situation were compassionate and, to the best of their ability, helpful. However, they knew that their hands were tied by regulations that refused to give mental anguish its place alongside physical injury, which affected the tone with which they approached my case. Rather than doing everything in their power to help me restore mental balance, they ultimately worsened matters by emphasizing that my situation was about to cost my family thousands of dollars - absolutely the last thing you want to hear in the middle of a crisis.

Senate Bill 567, if passed, means that, should a similarly racially-charged incident surface, students will not have the added burden of considering lost money while also fearing for their health and safety. This is an immensely important piece of legislation, and I thank you all for considering it.

**SB567\_FAV\_CameronCarden.pdf**

Uploaded by: Delegate Henson

Position: FAV



SHANEKA HENSON  
Legislative District 30A  
Anne Arundel County

Ways and Means Committee

Joint Committee on  
Children, Youth, and Families



The Maryland House of Delegates  
6 Bladen Street, Room 154  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3045 · 301-858-3045  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3045  
Shaneka.Henson@house.state.md.us

## THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

### TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 567

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

Chair Brian J. Feldman  
Vice Chair Cheryl C. Kagan  
2 West  
Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

#### Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Thank you for considering SB 567 “University System of Maryland – Student Withdrawal – Reimbursement of Tuition and Fees (The Cameron Carden Act of 2024)”. This bill will allow students to safely and efficiently withdraw from universities within Maryland’s educational system under certain, extenuating circumstances that pose a threat to the student’s physical or mental well-being.

Currently, the state of Maryland has no requirement of reimbursement to be made for students needing to withdraw based upon health restrictions. Each institution is free to construct its own policies on the matter, and many have in place allowances to be made for those withdrawing because of physical injury, illness, or hospitalization. While we commend individual institutions for making these policies, it is time this became standardized across our state university system. However, standardization will not go far enough, if we don’t also take into account our students’ mental health and wellness as well. SB 567 would do just that.

With all that is going on in our world today, we must do more to care for the mental and emotional health of young Marylanders, and do all we can to remove barriers from their accessing the care they need. No student should have to decide between receiving the care they need, and losing thousands of dollars. This was the decision faced by Cameron Carden, for whom this bill is named. Because of racially charged events on campus generally,

and personally being a target of racism, Cameron's mental health began to suffer.

However, not wanting to lose his tuition money, Cameron attempted to persevere in his classes. His family began to notice changes in his behavior and demeanor, and upon the encouragement from his concerned parents and in light of his deteriorating mental wellbeing, he chose to withdraw. Despite these circumstances, Cameron received no reimbursements for the semester due to his inability to meet the time constraints the university had imposed.

Unfortunately, this is true for many students, the full number we cannot know. How many students across our state are silently suffering because of the financial consequences of caring for their own mental health? Unfortunately, our health and wellbeing do not often align with nicely written timelines in University policy books. A favorable report on SB 567 is important because mental and physical health and wellbeing must take precedence over financial concerns. Even outside of the discussion of timelines, withdrawal terms relative to mental health are incredibly discretionary, with each university individually deeming what is fit enough to constitute a withdrawal, many choosing to not ever recognize mental health as a reasonable cause of withdrawal.

The goal of this bill is to help students, like Cameron, who encounter these sorts of circumstances, to seek reimbursement from their university. Hospitalizations, physical injuries, and mental illness are almost never expected. Students do not foresee such things happening during their semesters. This bill allows already suffering students to not be forced to make such a decision between health and finances. For this reason, I urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SHH', with a stylized flourish underneath.

Hon. Delegate Shaneka Henson

District 30A- Anne Arundel County

**SB567\_Gay-Carden.pdf**

Uploaded by: Gay Green-Carden

Position: FAV



Good Afternoon, and thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony.

Today, I come before you in my most important role, and one which many of you share: that of a parent.

Nothing is more important than your child's health and wellbeing, both physical and mental. Even in the throes of adolescence, when your child is at their least communicative, you develop a sixth sense for when something is out of order. Within seconds of asking your child how they're doing, you know if they're being burdened by something, even if they don't openly acknowledge as much.

That's what happened the weekend of October 11, 2019, when I visited Salisbury University's Parent Weekend. It was then I knew something was unusual and out of sorts. Sure enough, by the following Monday, he was calling me saying that he feared for his safety and needed to leave campus immediately. That's when it emerged that Cameron was experiencing a physical and mental breakdown from sexually- and racially-charged graffiti engraved on the walls of his first class **and he was** the one who reported it not once but twice to the university's officials.

Nobody - *nobody* - should feel compelled to place their child in perceived danger over financial obligations. Yet that is what the University administration, through their words and actions, sought to do - an injustice that this bill rightly seeks to prevent from recurring.

In my professional life, I interact with mental health providers and patients, and I see firsthand how our society ignores, disregards, or outright dismisses their struggles simply because they lack the visibility of a wheelchair, a crutch, or a cast.

To be clear, what we are discussing are indeed "extenuating circumstances": circumstances that make it impossible for a student to

attend class, to engage in coursework, and to be a functioning part of the university community.

This bill is a crucial next step toward making sure that our institutes of higher education are a safe and supportive place for our young people to grow as intellectuals and as citizens.

I look forward to seeing the successful passage of this Senate Bill 567 into law.

**SB567 2024 - UMBC SGA .pdf**

Uploaded by: Jaden Farris

Position: FAV

UMBC Student Government Association  
Senate and Executive Board



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**BILL:** Senate Bill 567 - Public Institutions of Higher Education - Student Withdrawal Policy - Reimbursement of Tuition and Fees (Cameron Carden Act of 2024)

**COMMITTEE:** Education, Energy, and Environment

**DATE:** February 14, 2024

**POSITION:** FAVORABLE

**CONTACT:** Jaden Farris - [jfarris1@umbc.edu](mailto:jfarris1@umbc.edu)

Honorable Committee Members:

On behalf of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County Student Government Association (UMBC SGA), I offer this testimony in support of the Cameron Carden Act of 2024, which requires University System of Maryland(USM) institutions to adopt policies for tuition and fee reimbursement under extenuating circumstances.

Student mental and physical health is paramount to academic success. No student should face the impossible choice between financial security and prioritizing their well-being. Sadly, this was the reality for Cameron Carden at Salisbury University. We believe no student should endure such hardship, and universities should prioritize student wellness above all else. Senate Bill 467 offers a crucial solution by establishing a consistent withdrawal policy that recognizes and prioritizes student well-being, including mental health.

Currently, the lack of policy leaves students vulnerable. Without guaranteed reimbursement for extenuating circumstances, the financial burden adds unimaginable stress to already challenging situations. Senate Bill 567 rectifies this by creating a standardized, legally binding policy. This ensures students facing unforeseen hardships, like Cameron, can prioritize their well-being without facing financial penalties

While some USM institutions address physical health concerns for reimbursement, many unfortunately overlook mental health. While UMBC recognizes mental health as an extenuating circumstance, the lack of a system-wide mandate puts this progress at risk. Senate Bill 567 safeguards this progress by ensuring mental health is recognized within USM institution withdrawal policies.

Accordingly, UMBC SGA respectfully requests a **favorable** committee report on Senate Bill 567.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jaden Farris".

Jaden Farris

Director of Government Affairs  
Student Government Association  
University of Maryland, Baltimore County

**HB539\_SB567 Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Meghna Chandrasekaran

Position: FAV

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Senate EEE Committee, on behalf of the University of Maryland Student Councils (USMSC), I am submitting this testimony requesting a favorable report on Senate Bill 567, the Cameron Carden Act of 2024.

The USMSC holds that both mental and physical wellness are essential to the success of our students. We believe students should not be forced to choose between their financial security and their mental health when pursuing their education. Unfortunately this was the choice that Cameron Carden and his family had to make when he was a student at Salisbury University. Students on any USM campus should not have to endure what Cameron Carden experienced and institutions of higher education should prioritize the wellness of students first and foremost. We believe that Senate Bill 567 would benefit the student body by establishing a consistent withdrawal policy across the USM and ensuring that mental health, in addition to physical health, is appropriately recognized as essential to student success and well-being.

Currently, there is no legal requirement that students at USM institutions be reimbursed for extenuating circumstances that impact their well-being. We believe that Senate Bill 567 will protect our students by creating a standardized, legal policy that ensures students who endure these extenuating circumstances do not have to add to their burdens by worrying about paying for classes that they were unable to complete.

Most, if not all, USM schools have policies in place that allow for reimbursed withdrawals based on physical illness; some universities have yet to do the same for mental health concerns. Without a legal requirement like the one proposed in Senate Bill 567, there is no guarantee that the current policy would not be modified to exclude mental health and wellness as an extenuating circumstance that qualifies for reimbursement.

In summary, Senate Bill 567 protects the well-being of all students within the USM system by ensuring that they may withdraw under specifically defined extenuating circumstances. We hope that the members of this committee recognize the value of this bill to our students and we respectfully request a favorable report on this bill.



**SB567 FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Morgan Mills

Position: FAV

February 14, 2024

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and distinguished members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

The National Alliance on Mental Illness, Maryland requests a favorable report on HB576. NAMI Maryland and our 11 local affiliates across the state represent a network of more than 58,000 families, individuals, community-based organizations, and service providers. NAMI Maryland is a 501(c)(3) non-profit dedicated to providing education, support, and advocacy for people living with mental illnesses, their families, and the wider community.

As a young adult, the transition to college can be intimidating. Many college students meet the criteria for at least one mental health problem. 75% of all mental health conditions begin by age 24. NAMI Maryland believes that colleges and universities should provide a full array of services, supports and appropriate accommodations for both campus-based and commuting students. The array should include mental health evaluations, peer support specialists, and on campus support.

With a robust array of services, students can be supported through their mental health conditions and remain in school.

However, many mental health symptoms are unpredictable. No one plans to have a crisis. In some instances, students may be unable to keep up with their academic responsibilities due to mental illness or staying in school/on campus may be unsafe or unhelpful for their well-being. Most colleges have a process for taking time off in a mental health emergency, but many colleges do not refund tuition or fees.

NAMI MD supports SB567, which would require public institutions of higher education in the state to establish a policy that would allow students to withdraw under extenuating circumstances and be reimbursed the tuition and fees they paid for the semester in which the student withdraws. Mental illness can develop and/or worsen over time and can be severe and persistent enough to interfere with a student's ability to function. Given the high cost of a college education, it is only just that a student be reimbursed for the tuition paid when they must withdraw due to an extenuating circumstance out of their control.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report.

Kathryn S. Farinholt  
Executive Director  
National Alliance on Mental Illness, Maryland

**Contact:** Morgan Mills  
Compass Government Relations  
Mmills@compassadvocacy.com

# **Testimony in support of SB0567.pdf**

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

2/14/2024

Richard Keith Kaplowitz  
Frederick, MD 21703

**TESTIMONY ON SB#/0567- POSITION: FAVORABLE**

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

**TO:** Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

**FROM:** Richard Keith Kaplowitz

**My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#/0567, Public Institutions of Higher Education - Student Withdrawal Policy - Reimbursement of Tuition and Fees (Cameron Carden Act of 2024)**

As a senior student at Frederick Community College currently having earned three degrees from FCC over the last eight years I have been in classes where an emergency family situation has caused a fellow student to withdraw from our class.

A sudden withdrawal by a student is, in an emergency, facing a crisis in which financial resources can make a difference. This bill recognizes that life happens and requires our institutions of higher learning to make allowances for that situation. The reimbursement of tuition and fees can be a lifeline in some instances and may permit the student to resume their education when that emergency has passed.

This bill is an ethical and moral commitment to support every student when something beyond their control makes continuing their students impossible.

**. I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#/0567.**

**SB567\_Susan-Rich.pdf**

Uploaded by: Susan Rich

Position: FAV

## **Susan D. Rich, MD, MPH, DFAPA**

### **House Bill: HB 539 Senate Bill: SB 567**

Dear Esteemed Legislators:

It is with honor and urgency that I speak to you on behalf of Maryland's transitional age college students in support of the Cameron Carden Act. Although I do not speak on behalf of any of these organizations, I am past President of the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry of Greater Washington, a member of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Distinguished Fellow in the American Psychiatric Association, and a member of the American Medical Association. I give annual lectures at George Washington University and have given lectures and grand rounds at University of Maryland Student Health Services, Johns Hopkins University, Georgetown University, Springfield Hospital in Sykesville, and many other teaching hospitals across the US, Canada and Lithuania. I have not been paid by anyone to give this testimony and am not here today speaking as anyone's psychiatrist. I have met with Cameron Carden and have administered questionnaires for purposes of assessment but am not his psychiatrist and am not speaking today in that role. I have come here as a staunch advocate for all young people with mental health issues that are prevalent, under-reported, and under acknowledged among the technical schools, community college, college, and university campuses in our state.

As a private practice child/adolescent psychiatrist in Montgomery County since 2006, I have seen many of Maryland's college students in my home office. Like other transitional age youth, college students are still finding themselves and their place in the world. Most of the college students I have seen as new patients have had difficulty transitioning to college, many of them leaving school in the middle of the semester due to mental health reasons, life stressors, or other extraordinary circumstances. Typically, if they are doing well enough to make it to the end of the semester, they are usually able to stay where they are until they are able to transfer to a different school.

The cost of education for individuals and families is extraordinary. I know something about this as I paid my way through an undergraduate degree in microbiology, a graduate degree in public health and a medical degree. The issue in question is that of reimbursement for tuition at in-state universities if an extraordinary circumstance happens after the deadline for reimbursement has passed. Cameron Carden's case exemplifies such a circumstance. He had grown up in the Annapolis area, excelled academically and in football at the Annapolis Christian School, graduated from the St. Thomas More Prep School in Massachusetts and entered the Western New England University in Massachusetts to play football as a freshman. At that point, he was a well-adjusted college student athlete with good self-esteem, resilience, well-spoken, and good citizenship. As the youngest of his siblings, Cameron really wanted to be back in Maryland closer to family where his parents could see him play football. His coach in Massachusetts had graduated from Salisbury University, which influenced Cameron's decision to transfer there. My understanding is that he loved the campus at Salisbury, was impressed by the school's mission, and was excited that his parents could attend some of his games. Unfortunately, a series of traumatic experiences early in his first semester led to him developing fears of attending class, heightened stress response, and other symptoms that progressively worsened leading to him leaving school. At this point, Cameron meets diagnostic criteria for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder with severe panic attacks that have affected his ability to function in social situations.

How did a socially confident, independent, well-adjusted student athlete end up with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder at one of our state's college campuses? While putting away some supplies during his theater class, Cameron witnessed racist graffiti for the first time in his life painted outside the theater room. The graffiti included a derogatory sexual comment and demoralizing racial slur. His heart started racing, he became dysphoric and disassociated, felt uneasy about the people around him, and very suspicious that it may be someone in class who had done it. In that frightened state, he and the student with him told the theater professor who simply said, "Don't let those 'pr\*cks' drive you away" (paraphrased). The professor reported it to the administration, but nothing substantial was done other than calling the maintenance crew to paint over the graffiti.

When the graffiti reappeared overnight with even more violent and slanderous content, it confirmed Cameron's



anxiety and fear that the school would not be able to keep him safe. Around that time, while walking to class, he heard someone shout the N\* word to him – again, another activation of his already traumatized nervous system.

Address: 12640 Rolling Road, Potomac, MD 20854; Phone: 301-251-1190

Why did these symptoms happen to Cameron? The initial experience then the subsequent retraumatizing events were shocks to his naïve nervous system, having been relatively cocooned in predominantly private Caucasian schools where he was included in all aspects of the schools and sports. The demeaning, insulting words left him feeling frightened, suspicious/paranoid and anticipating other physical or socially disenfranchising situations happening. This emotional trauma led to trouble sleeping, focusing, and attending classes out of increasing anxiety, panic symptoms, and fear. He had never experienced this degree of hate, slander, and trauma of systemic racism that other students may have been more desensitized to. He was unable to speak with his parents about the incident when they came the following weekend because of a sense of emotional numbness, disbelief, and despondency. His mother noticed these symptoms and tried to talk with him about it, but he was suppressing it out of not wanting her and his dad to worry about him. Living in that community with triggers for the anxiety eventually led him to call his parents to go home the day after Parents' Weekend. When he and his parents met with the school, the attitude, and messages he heard from administration were confusing – “If you leave now that the deadline has passed [for tuition reimbursement], your parents will lose their money (from tuition).” He assured them that it did not matter, that his mental health was more important and that he would pay his parents back.

While Cameron has moved on with his life and education here in Maryland, he and his parents are having to bear the burden of owing Salisbury University the tuition for his first semester there. He is also living with a condition that has taken away his love of and an aspiring career in football. His day-to-day life in his current work in public health and learning environment has been affected. The academics are triggering his feelings of distress and kindling his fears ignited during the episode at Salisbury University. He often has difficulty sleeping and frequently wakes up in the middle of the night, having trouble getting back to sleep. All of these symptoms, in my opinion, has been affected by the horrific racist graffiti that spawned PTSD. Cameron's mental health functioning was impacted by the catastrophic and extraordinary circumstances that should have been considered when Cameron requested his tuition reimbursement.

There are many other students like Cameron who decide to leave shortly after the reimbursement deadline has passed, for example COVID related mental health issues. I recently had a young lady who had not attended classes the entire fall of 2021 at a college in South Carolina and just recently was able to get her college paperwork accepted for reimbursement for medical reasons (due to mental health concerns). Since private elementary and secondary schools have tuition insurance options, perhaps we should consider that in our state. It should not take an act of Congress or the state Legislature for this to happen, but here we are, asking you for that to happen.

I feel very strongly as a child/adolescent psychiatrist that The Cameron Carden Act is an example of what we can do in our state to help support families who are already putting so much into their children's education. Thank you so much for considering my testimony.

Respectfully submitted,

**Susan D Rich MD MPH**

*Electronically signed/4-4-22 at 2:13 pm*

Susan D. Rich, MD, MPH, DFAPA  
Child/Adolescent & Adult Psychiatrist

Address: 12640 Rolling Road, Potomac, MD 20854; Phone: 301-251-1190

**SB567\_USM\_FWA.pdf**

Uploaded by: Andy Clark

Position: FWA



**Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment**  
**Senate Bill 567**  
**Public Institutions of Higher Education – Student Withdrawal Policy**  
**Reimbursement of Tuition and Fees**  
**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 567. The bill requires institutions to adopt a policy authorizing students to withdraw for extenuating circumstances such as illness, injury, hospitalization, and mental health and wellness. The University System of Maryland (USM) supports students, and mental health is taken as seriously as physical health, and our campuses support this step. The bill also requires a provision for “reimbursement” of tuition and fees. The USM urges support of the bill and its intent but respectfully requests amending the word “reimburse,” which could cause confusion about the process required. We all want students with mental health or physical health concerns to be impacted as little as possible financially and in terms of their educational opportunities.

USM institutions work closely with students experiencing challenges with physical and mental health to help them complete their studies or return to campus after a hiatus. All USM campuses have policies to allow students experiencing extraordinary circumstances to withdraw from the institution. The decision for any member of our community to withdraw from an institution is not one that should be taken lightly. First, the well-being of the student is the priority. Proper medical assessment by a licensed physician, diagnosis, and a plan of treatment can help the student ease their struggle. That work, on the part of the student and their health provider, outweighs everything else. Generally, campus staff and faculty work closely with students experiencing challenges with physical and mental health to help them complete their studies or return to campus after a hiatus.

Withdrawal policies begin with the first day of instruction, and the failure to attend the university or attend classes does not change this policy. The funds schedule may vary campus-to-campus, but generally, students can expect a 90% refund in the 1st week; 50% in the second week; and 25% in the 3rd week. Beyond that timeframe, our focus is to work with students so they may complete the course successfully. Institutions and students must, however, consider the implications of withdrawal for the purposes of the return of federal financial *or Return of Title IV funds (R2T4)*.

The federal government requires that when a Title IV aid recipient (Direct Stafford/Plus loan, Carl Perkins Loan, Pell Grant and SEOG) withdraws from a university during a period of enrollment in which the recipient began attendance, the university must calculate the percentage of Title IV assistance the student did not earn and return those funds to the federal government. Once 60 percent of the enrollment period has elapsed, 100 percent of the aid is determined to be earned, and no aid has to be returned. If a student withdraws at that point, and tuition was paid by federal aid or state aid, the student will not be “reimbursed” because the student did not technically pay. Students receiving Title IV federal financial aid must also complete exit counseling as a condition of their loan

agreement. That process begins here: <https://studentaid.gov/exit-counseling/>. Students are allowed by the federal government a certain amount of money based on credits attempted, credits earned, and amount borrowed to date. The rules around these processes cannot be altered by campuses and are subject to federal audit. State aid also has certain guidelines that have to be followed.

As institutions work with students in extraordinary circumstances, they may not be able to “reimburse” a student, as the bill calls for, but they may be able to adjust charges, and aid, to minimize the financial impact on the student. They must, however, remain within federal and state regulations for aid. *We therefore recommend amending 15-138 (B) (2) (line 6) so that “reimburse a student for tuition and fees” is replaced with “cancel or reduce student tuition and fee costs.”*

Thank you for allowing the USM to share our position on Senate Bill 567.



**SB0567\_MACC\_FWA.pdf**

Uploaded by: Drew Jabin

Position: FWA



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

**SB 567 - Public Institutions of Higher Education - Student Withdrawal Policy -  
Reimbursement of Tuition and Fees (Cameron Carden Act of 2024)**

**Position: Favorable with Amendments**

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The Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC), representing Maryland's 16 community colleges, supports **SB 567** 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 **SB 567**.

Please contact Brad Phillips ([bphillips@mdacc.org](mailto:bphillips@mdacc.org)) or Drew Jabin ([djabin@mdacc.org](mailto:djabin@mdacc.org)) with questions.