

SB637_USM_FAV.pdf

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Position: FAV



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.



SB637_Brooks.pdf

Uploaded by: Benjamin Brooks

Position: FAV

BENJAMIN BROOKS
Legislative District 10
Baltimore County

Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee
Energy Subcommittee

Chair, Joint Electric Universal
Service Program Workgroup



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

Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
February 28, 2024

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on SBO637, Higher Education - Undocumented Students - Out-of-State Tuition Exemption Eligibility. The purpose of this bill is to expand access to higher education for undocumented students by adjusting the tax return requirements for in-state tuition eligibility from three years of returns to just one.

In 2011, the General Assembly passed the Maryland Dream Act, which allows undocumented students graduating from our state's high schools and community colleges to qualify for in-state tuition rates. In 2018, this legislature reaffirmed that decision by extending considerations to undocumented students allowing them to apply and receive certain state-based aid, by passing the Jill Wrigley Memorial Scholarship Expansion Act. Yet undocumented students are not enrolling in higher education institutions at the rates lawmakers envisioned. Every year, Maryland graduates about 2,000 undocumented students, but in 2022, only 575 undocumented students enrolled in community college or four-year institutions. That is roughly 7% of undocumented students eligible for out-of-state tuition exemptions.

Current law requires undocumented families to be tax-paying Marylanders for at least three years. This requirement presents a substantial barrier to students who are otherwise eligible for the tuition rate exemption but cannot provide the previous three years of Maryland tax returns. Lowering this requirement to one year places undocumented students on an equal playing field with documented students who are only required to show one year of taxes.

Most states base in-state tuition eligibility on where a student went to high school, not immigration status. 24 states and the District of Columbia provide in-state tuition to the states' undocumented students. 18 states and DC also provide access to state financial aid. Of the 24 states, only Maryland and Virginia have a tax requirement impeding undocumented students to receive both state aid and in-state tuition.

Undocumented students work equally as hard, if not harder than any other student. Twelve years ago, the legislature took measures to provide them with an equal pathway to higher education by passing the Dream Act. The data we have now makes it clear this pathway is

incomplete. We must make adjustments to secure this step so that undocumented students do not continue to slip through the cracks. Our state's undocumented students deserve a truly equal opportunity to contribute to our nation's progress. This bill levels the playing field, setting the same requirements for all students eligible for in-state tuition.

For these reasons, I am requesting a favorable report on SB637.

With kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benjamin T. Brooks".

Benjamin Brooks

Written Testimony In Favor of SB637 - Brian Kramer

Uploaded by: Brian Kramer

Position: FAV

Written Testimony In Favor of SB637 - Brian Kramer

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

I hope this finds you well. My name is Brian Kramer and I am a social studies teacher for Montgomery County Public Schools. I write to you today to express my strong support for SB637, which would expand college opportunities for so many of my students and neighbors. This bill would expand the progress made many years ago in giving a helping hand to immigrant communities in Maryland, while helping these families with college affordability.

I graduated from Northwood High School in Silver Spring, which had many students that benefited from Maryland's wisdom to pass the Dream Act. Many of my friends would not have been able to attend college in a two or four year capacity were it not for the Maryland Dream Act. This bill would expand these opportunities to immigrants seeking to call Maryland home, while immensely benefiting our state in the process through diversified neighborhoods, cultural enrichment, an expansion in tax revenues, a better labor force, and so much more.

As a high school teacher, the number one barrier to college access that I hear is cost. This cost cannot be understated for families that live in precarious situations due to having to uplift their lives to find safety and opportunity in our state, yet these families also benefit the most from access to higher education. Education is a vital social good that creates a healthier society, but is also an incredibly important economic engine for our state as well. I cannot overstate the positive impacts that this legislation would have on the Montgomery County community enough.

Thank you for your time and for your consideration of SB637. Please let me know if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.

Kind regards,
Brian Kramer (District 20)

bkramer5508@gmail.com

SB0637_ Undocumented_ Students_ Out_ of_ State_ Tuition_

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



**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.

SB0637_MACC_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Drew Jabin

Position: FAV

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
February 28, 2024

**SB 637 - Higher Education - Undocumented Students - Out-of-State Tuition Exemption
Eligibility**

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC), representing Maryland's 16 community colleges, supports **SB 637**, which aims to increase eligibility for in-state tuition rates in the State. Current law requires individuals (or their parents/guardians) to file taxes in Maryland for at least three years to qualify for in-state tuition – SB 637 would change this requirement to require only one year of taxes filed in the State.

This legislation will strongly benefit individuals or families who have recently moved to the state or have only recently started filing taxes. Allowing more students to qualify for in-state tuition reduces the financial burden associated with higher education – and promotes social mobility and equitable opportunities for all individuals to pursue their educational aspirations.

Community colleges in Maryland take an inclusive approach to education and believe this legislation is another tool for making higher education more accessible to a broader range of students. Accordingly, MACC urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** vote on **SB 637**.

For questions, please contact Brad Phillips (bphillips@mdacc.org) or Drew Jabin (djabin@mdacc.org).

MD Catholic Conference_SB 637_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Garrett O'Day

Position: FAV



**MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE**

February 28, 2024

SB 637

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

Senate Education, Energy & the Environment Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in SUPPORT of Senate Bill 637. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

In 2019, Senate Bill 537 of that year altered the circumstances under which some individuals, including undocumented immigrants, would be exempt from paying the out-of-state tuition rate at Maryland public institutions of higher education, making them eligible to pay an equivalent rate to the resident tuition rate at a public senior higher education institution. The Conference supported that legislation and now supports the amendment proposed by SB 637.

Senate Bill 637 would build upon that exemption, affording students the ability to pay in-state tuition where their parent or legal guardians have filed a Maryland income tax return in the preceding year. Current law requires a three-year period of state income tax filings in order to receive in-state tuition rates.

The Church's care of and concern for immigrants directly flows out of our belief that every immigrant is endowed with God given dignity and ought to be treated with love and respect. In fact, "The Church supports the human rights of all people and offers them pastoral care, education, and social services, no matter what the circumstances of entry into this country, and it works for the respect of the human dignity of all especially those who find themselves in desperate circumstances" (2000, *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity, A Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops*).

By making a college education more accessible and affordable to Maryland youth, including undocumented youth, we are able to provide them with greater opportunities – opportunities for higher education, to acquire job skills, and to have a better chance of supporting themselves and their families in the future. The Conference appreciates your consideration and, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 637.

Gerson Testimony for SB0637.pdf

Uploaded by: Gerson Quinteros

Position: FAV



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

Greetings-

Honorable Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Committee,

My name is Gerson Quinteros and I am the DC, Maryland, and Virginia Lead Organizer for United We Dream, we are a national organization in service of immigrant young people across the nation and with one of our priority regions being Maryland. We currently serve and work along side over 33, 915 in Maryland with majority being immigrant young people and allies in support of young people. e ..

One of the many areas of work via United We Dream is supporting our High School members apply for college and we know first hand, Applying to college is already a daunting task, and it becomes even more challenging for undocumented students. Affording college as an undocumented individual can be difficult since many do not qualify for scholarships or financial aid.

In Maryland, some undocumented students may not qualify for the Maryland Dream Act due to tax requirements. For instance, one of our members did not fulfill the requirement of paying taxes for three years in the state of Maryland as their family made a decision to move out of state and then move back later in their high school years. We have seen how members who live in DC or in other states across the country move into the state of Maryland in their junior or senior year but do not qualify due to the requirement.

When students are not eligible for in-state tuition, Maryland loses high-performing students to other states. United We Dream Organizer has helped many youths in finding alternative college options outside of Maryland by searching for scholarships they qualify for or even finding affordable college options because they cannot afford the expensive tuition fees in the state. If SB637 passes, it will not only help students afford college in Maryland, but it will also help them enroll in colleges and universities in Maryland.

Maryland has always been a state that welcomes people from different backgrounds, and has set a great example of leadership for the DMV region. I recall the time when the Dream Act was passed in Maryland, and other states followed our lead and made similar changes. I trust that you will make the right decisions and pass the bill, because the future of many young people rests in your hands. Thank you for taking the time to listen to me.

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB637.pdf

Uploaded by: Jacqueline Alyea

Position: FAV

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB637

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

Committee: Education, Energy and the Environment

Date: February 23, 2024

Position: Support

Good afternoon,

My name is Jacqueline Alyea and I am a School Counselor at Owings Mills High School in Owings Mills, Maryland. I strongly support House Bill SB637 Higher Education- Undocumented Students- Out of State Tuition Exemption Eligibility.

I am a counselor in a school where about one quarter of students are undocumented. I am responsible for connecting all students with a plan after graduation. I cannot connect undocumented students with military options, jobs right out of high school, or even apprenticeship or trade programs with a work component. College is the only option for undocumented students, and it is not easily accessible for all. As it stands, a student or their parent must have paid taxes for three years prior to graduating to be eligible for the Dream Act, which qualifies students both for in-state tuition and for state financial aid eligibility. If students don't have three years, they are charged out-of-state or even international student prices, sometimes tripling the cost, while having no access to aid. This renders college an impossible option. I find it hard to understand the point of educating undocumented children in K-12 without the hope of them going on to pursue their dreams and become productive members of Maryland's economy.

I have worked closely with a student, John (name changed for privacy), for two years now. His dream is to become a teacher. He has a 3.5 GPA, and has already taken CCBC classes through the dual enrollment program. However, John moved from out of state two years ago and does not have three years of his parents' taxes to submit to qualify for the Dream Act. He will graduate with no plan, in hopes of finding a job somewhere and encouraging his mom to file her taxes for one more year. At that point, without the support of his school and counseling team, he will be attempting to navigate the incredibly tricky and often contradictory process of applying for the MSFAA and pursuing a college experience under the Dream Act. I have worked with many students to navigate this process- and even as a professional counselor whose first language is English, it is very confusing. I have little faith that a student would be able to navigate the process themselves after graduating.

At this point, Maryland expects families- families who have not been given the right to legally work in the state of Maryland- to have paid three years of taxes, and non-undocumented students' families to have paid one year of taxes to qualify for FAFSA. This is not equitable and causes the state of Maryland to limit opportunities for undocumented students. Data from 2023 (heavily skewed missing information from schools) and [2022](#) (more complete data) show that only about 7% of the 2,000+ undocumented students we graduate each year in Maryland make it to college in Maryland under the Dream Act. By these measures, the Dream Act is not working for most undocumented students.

This is an urgent matter this year as we face a workforce shortage in many fields. My current student data shows that almost half of my undocumented students are interested in working in the healthcare field, something Maryland desperately needs. Limiting access for these high achieving, hardworking students to pursue higher education not only hurts the students and their families, but also limits Maryland's workforce and economy at large. We deserve to have students like John become teachers. For these reasons, I ask for a **FAVORABLE REPORT** on SB637.

Jacqueline Alyea

School Counselor

Owings Mills High School

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Montgomery_2024.pdf

Uploaded by: John Montgomery

Position: FAV

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

Committee: Education, Energy and the Environment

Date: February 26, 2024

Position: Support

Good afternoon,

My name is John Montgomery, and I am a middle school counselor in Reisterstown, Maryland and I strongly support House Bill SB637 Higher Education-Undocumented Students - Out of State Tuition Exemption Eligibility.

Before shifting to middle school, I was the ESOL Counselor for four years at a high school in Owings Mills, MD. During this time, I worked with new immigrants from throughout the world. During conversations with students about their post-secondary plans, we often navigated to a point where they may openly reveal their immigration status and thus their hesitancy towards attending a college or university because of the high cost to attend. As a counselor working with amazingly talented and eager students, having them share this hesitancy became a frustratingly common reality. Factoring in that these students are earning a high school diploma from the State of Maryland, it just didn't quite make sense. Now, in fairness, college as a post-secondary option wasn't fully closed, but it almost became more productive to look at private institutions who might be willing to provide large financial aid packages before recommending in-state public colleges and universities where students may have to pay out-of-state tuition. In the end, options for undocumented students grew limited and often unreliable.

Keep in mind, that if students have not had the good fortune of successfully navigating all the way through the process of earning legal residency status and/or work authorization, an apprenticeship/trade program, or other jobs straight out of high school become nonviable. As a result, and almost by default, attending college in some format becomes the only true post-secondary option for undocumented students.

As you may know, a prospective undocumented college student must pay Maryland taxes for 3 years prior to graduating to be eligible for Maryland Dream Act. This would qualify them for in-state tuition and for state financial aid. This is a great resource! That said, it requires that students have parents or caregivers who are knowledgeable enough to take the immediate steps needed to get the 3-year clock running. Failure to do so and students may run into costs that could run double or triple the cost of the already soaring tuition costs. Even if the family is doing all the correct things right away, time may be a factor where they can only provide 2 years out of the 3 required at the time of high school graduation, which may result in the student taking a year off just to afford tuition.

At this point, I contend that this process is entirely too cumbersome for families to navigate and limits the options available to students who could ultimately become assets to our community by becoming our next wave of teachers, nurses, and entrepreneurs.

For these reasons, I ask for a FAVORABLE REPORT on SB637.

BaltimoreCounty_FAV_SB0637.pdf

Uploaded by: John Olszewski

Position: FAV

JOHN A. OLSZEWSKI, JR.
County Executive



JENNIFER AIOSA
Director of Government Affairs

AMANDA KONTZ CARR
Legislative Officer

WILLIAM J. THORNE
Legislative Associate

BILL NO.: **SB 637**

TITLE: Higher Education – Undocumented Students – Out-of-State
Tuition Exemption Eligibility

SPONSOR: Senators Brooks and Hettleman

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: February 28, 2024

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** SB 637 – Higher Education – Undocumented Students – Out-of-State Tuition Exception Eligibility. This legislation would decrease from 3 years to 1 year the number of years an individual or the individual's parents or guardians must file taxes before the academic year for eligibility to receive in-state tuition.

Allowing undocumented graduates of Maryland high schools to pay in-state tuition sooner will provide a powerful incentive for these students to complete high school and go on to obtain a college degree. According to the 2015-19 American Community Survey, there are more than 16,000 undocumented children under 16 living in Maryland. Maryland can best position itself for future success and set a course for economic growth and wealth-creation by removing barriers and providing better access to higher education for all our kids – native-born and immigrant.

At the Community College of Baltimore County, recently arrived undocumented students pay \$372 per college credit, while students who are eligible for the Maryland DREAM Act pay \$122. Their families live, work, and contribute socially, culturally, and economically to this state. In 2019, undocumented families living in Baltimore County paid \$22.7 million in state and local taxes in addition to \$30.8 million in federal taxes.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 637 from the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee. For more information, please contact Jenn Aiosa, director of Government Affairs, at jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov.

SB637_MSEA_Lamb_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Lauren Lamb

Position: FAV

FAVORABLE
Senate Bill 637
Higher Education - Undocumented Students - Out-of-State Tuition Exemption
Eligibility

Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment
February 28, 2024

Lauren Lamb
Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 637, which would reduce the number of years an individual or the individual's parent or guardian must file taxes before the academic year to be eligible to receive an out-of-state tuition exemption.

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).

As public school educators, our charge is to teach and guide each and every student, regardless of immigration status, income, or background. We firmly believe that all students should have the opportunity to continue working toward their career goals after they graduate high school, which for many means having access to postsecondary studies. This legislation would rightly expand that access by making more Maryland high school graduates eligible for in-state tuition at state colleges and universities.

We were vocal supporters of the Maryland Dream Act during its initial passage, and we continue to champion policies that promote equitable access to higher education. Adjusting the in-state tuition eligibility requirement for taxes filed from 3 years to 1 year will make this policy available to a greater number of hardworking Maryland students, including those who are undocumented immigrants, and ensures access for those who were not aware of or able to meet the tax requirements earlier in their high school career.

We urge the Committee to issue a Favorable Report on Senate Bill 637.

Luz Testimony SB637.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Luz Chavez Gonzales

Position: FAV



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.

MSFAA Senate Hearing Testimony_Hashiru.pdf

Uploaded by: Mariam Hashiru

Position: FAV

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

Committee: Education, Energy and the Environment

Date: February 27, 2024

Position: Support

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

My name is Mariam Hashiru. I am an Undocumented Pre-pharmacy student, a Junior at Morgan State University with a chemistry major, and a recent graduate from The Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC' 2023) serving as a liaison for resources for high school and college Undocumented students especially at CCBC and Baltimore County public schools (BCPS) like my former high school, Owings Mills High School in Owings Mills, Maryland. I am writing on behalf of UndocuBear, an undocumented student Organization in Morgan State University and I strongly support House Bill SB637 Higher Education-Undocumented Students-Out of State Tuition Exemption Eligibility.

I am an undocumented student who moved from Nigeria at the age of 13 and spent all my high school years in Maryland and little did I know that being an undocumented student will cordially invite more challenges to my plate in the search of attaining a college education in the United States. I understand how hard it is to constantly hear phrases like “NO” or “You are not eligible” and would always imagine the number of teenagers that had to give up their education when they finally found hope - a financial aid opportunity made for students like them but are not eligible because they cannot provide 3 years proof of taxes from their parents or legal guardians. My goal is to make undocumented students like me around Maryland aware that pursuing an education is still a possibility no matter what their status says and is the reason why I am testifying on behalf of all the undocumented students in Maryland today. 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 hit with fear during my 11th grade year when my peers were talking about FAFSA, and my high school counselors were not equipped or aware of resources that could help me. I would conduct research on resources for “students not eligible for FAFSA” every day after school and it wasn't until I came across the Maryland Dream Act online. It allowed students like me an opportunity to pay in-state tuition at CCBC at the time.

Through that I went to CCBC debt free and was able to get a full ride at Morgan State University where I am currently taking my prerequisites for pharmacy school with the goal of starting a PharmD in the 2024-2025 school year. Despite everything I have gone through as a student and the issues I faced due to my immigration status; I aspire to become an industrial pharmacist closing the gaps in the skincare world. The Maryland Dream Act changed my life, and SB637 will change many others.

For these reasons, I ask for a FAVORABLE REPORT on SB637.

SB0637 - Higher Education - Undocumented Students

Uploaded by: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus

Position: FAV



MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

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TO: Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair
Education, Energy, and Environment Committee Members

FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus

DATE: 2/27/24

RE: SB0637 - Higher Education - Undocumented Students -
Out-of-State Tuition Exemption Eligibility

The MLLC supports SB0637 - Higher Education - Undocumented Students - Out-of-State Tuition Exemption Eligibility, 2024

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of SB0637.

According to data from the Higher Ed Immigration Portal, first and second-generation immigrant students comprise 31% of all students enrolled in higher education in the State.¹ However, among Latinos ages 18 to 34, only 19% are enrolled in higher education.² A primary systemic barrier to accessing higher education is the exorbitant costs, especially when students who reside in the state do not qualify for in-state tuition.

To eliminate barriers, this bill will reduce the number of years required from a 3-year period annually to have filed Maryland income tax return to a 1-year period beginning the year immediately before an academic year by an individual or individual's parent or legal guardian in order to qualify for the out-of-state tuition exemption associated with tuition at public institutions of higher education in the State; inclusive of out-of-state tuition exemptions for undocumented students.

For these reasons, the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus respectfully requests a favorable report on SB0637.

¹ [Higher Ed Immigration Portal](#)

² [Excelencia in Education](#)

CASA_FAV_SB637.pdf

Uploaded by: Ninfa Amador

Position: FAV



Testimony in SUPPORT of SB637

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

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

February 27, 2024

Dear Honorable Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

CASA strongly supports Senate Bill 637 - Higher Education - Undocumented Students - Out-of-State Tuition Exemption Eligibility. CASA is a national powerhouse organization building power and improving the quality of life in working-class: Black, Latino/a/e, Afro-descendent, Indigenous, and Immigrant communities.

With a membership of over 155,000 members, CASA creates change with its power-building model blending human services, community organizing, and advocacy to serve the full spectrum of the needs, dreams, and aspirations of members. For nearly forty years, CASA has employed grassroots community organizing to bring our communities closer together and fight for justice, while simultaneously providing much-needed services, helping to ensure that low-income immigrants can live rich and full lives.

Senate Bill 637 advocates for reducing the tax return requirement for in-state tuition eligibility from three years to one year. Undocumented CASA youth leaders played a pivotal role in advocating for the passage of the Maryland Dream Act, standing at the forefront of the movement. Their courageous activism and tireless efforts helped shed light on the importance of providing opportunities for undocumented students to pursue higher education. Currently, thousands have benefitted from this program. However, there is still much that can be done. SB 637 is crucial in our continued effort towards education equity in dismantling barriers to higher education, especially for students facing complex family dynamics, unaccompanied youth, and recent arrivals.

The current three-year tax return requirement poses a significant challenge for many families and students seeking higher education. This barrier has resulted in talented and motivated youth being denied in-state tuition, hindering their access to higher education and stifling their potential.

CASA operates robust youth education programs throughout our footprint actively engaging with first and second-generation immigrant youth through various programs designed to support their academic journeys, foster leadership skills, and provide a robust college and career readiness curriculum. Assisting students in applying to colleges, for financial aid, and developing

personalized plans to help them transition to their post-secondary endeavors. Annually, supporting hundreds of students in qualifying for the Maryland Dream Act and the state financial aid application, MHEC One-App (formerly MSFAA). Notably, the primary obstacle preventing many students from qualifying is the three-year tax requirement.

Reducing the tax return requirement to one year is a compassionate and practical solution, recognizing the unique challenges faced by families and students. This adjustment aligns with principles of fairness, inclusivity, and equal access to education, fostering a more just society. Maintaining the current tax requirements will continue to impede students' ability to pursue higher education, as failure to meet this criterion not only disqualifies students from in-state tuition but also renders them ineligible for state financial aid, further limiting their opportunities. This is a significant factor in an immigrant student's ability to pursue higher education. Currently, the University of Maryland's in-state tuition rate is \$11,233 contrasting starkly with the steep rate of \$39,469 demanded for out-of-state tuition. Although not as steep, community college tuition rates also vary depending on in-state or out-of-state designations. Immigrant Marylanders who have completed their K-12 education in our public school system and aspire to further their academic pursuits encounter a significant hurdle upon their high school graduation if their parents lack three years' worth of tax records.

Moreover, this change extends beyond individual students, positively impacting Maryland's workforce and economy. Nationally and here in Maryland, we are facing a worker shortage in all fields including healthcare and education. Data shows that in Maryland 23% of our nurses are immigrants.¹ An accessible higher education system leads to a more diverse and skilled workforce, contributing significantly to the overall growth and prosperity of our state.

CASA respectfully asks the committee to consider the numerous advantages of SB 637 and submit a favorable report.

¹ <https://www.higheredimmigrationportal.org/state/maryland/>

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB637.pdf

Uploaded by: Olga Lainez

Position: FAV

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB637

Higher Education – Undocumented Students – Out of State Tuition

Exemption Eligibility

Committee: Education, Energy and the Environment

Date: February 28, 2024

Position: Support

Good afternoon, my name is Michelle Lainez, I am here today to express my strong support for Senate Bill SB637, specifically addressing Higher Education – Undocumented Students – Out of State Tuition Exemption Eligibility. I'm a resident of District 17, and a proud youth leader of United We Dream, the nation's largest immigrant youth led network.

The enactment of this SB637 directly influences my lived experience and many other undocumented students like me. I went to school in Montgomery County Public Schools nearly my whole life, but housing insecurity made my family's journey end up in a brand new state for nearly a year. We relocated back to Gaithersburg, Maryland in 2019, and I found myself in a challenging situation related to college tuition. Despite graduating from Gaithersburg High School as part of the Class of 2020, I encountered the obstacle of being charged out-of-state tuition due to having one year instead of three tax filings, and relocating for that year made filing taxes for my mother so much harder than anticipated.

Unfortunately, this rendered me ineligible for the Maryland Dream Act, which would have otherwise facilitated the pursuit of higher education for me. Being undocumented and low-income, narrowed down my options regarding college options. I dreamed of going to the University of Maryland and I had planned to attend one of the best community colleges, Montgomery College, which is only ten minutes away from my house. However, my aspiration ended quickly after finding out that I was not going to be able to afford the tuition.

Today I am fortunate enough to have found a university that understands the struggles and legislative barriers that undocumented students face when trying to pursue higher education. I am graduating from Trinity Washington University with a degree in Criminal Justice this upcoming spring with the hopes of providing support for my community and eventually attend law school.

I believe that addressing and rectifying such issues through legislation, as proposed in Senate Bill SB637, is essential in ensuring fair and equitable access to education for all students, regardless of their immigration status or financial circumstances.

For these reasons, I ask for a FAVORABLE REPORT on SB637.

Testimony in support of SB0637.pdf

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

SB0637_RichardKaplowitz_FAV

2/28//2024

Richard Keith Kaplowitz
Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON SB#/0637 – FAVORABLE

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

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

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#0637, Higher Education - Undocumented Students - Out-of-State Tuition Exemption Eligibility

I urge your support to ensure that Maryland sets a national example making undocumented students who want to learn in Maryland and contribute to the economic vitality of the state be granted the opportunity to do so. In many cases these students were brought into the country undocumented by parents fleeing intolerable conditions in their home country. They fled to America to have increased opportunities to care for their children. They came to protect the lives of their children. This bill serves to recognize the sacrifice made to have these students integrated into our communities. If the undocumented parent has become a contributing member of their location, paying taxes and working to support their family, we should recognize that effort by assisting their children to learn and grow similarly as productive members of our population.

I approach the aims of this bill from my Jewish religious belief's framework. Leviticus 19:33-34 commands us "When strangers reside with you in your land, you shall not wrong them. **The strangers who reside with you shall be to you as your citizens**".

This view of how we should and must treat each other with compassion and justice as equal children of a loving G-d should be the principle for a favorable report on this bill.

It is also a fact that we do have undocumented residents living, working, paying taxes, and contributing to the life of our communities. The children may have come as infants and have known no life but their time in Maryland. We need to do everything we can to make everyone living in Maryland a full participant in working to better themselves to better their community.

This bill has a goal to ensure everyone who lives in a community is treated in an ethical and moral manner regardless of their status.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report and pass SB0637.

SB637- Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Riya Gupta

Position: FAV



**Testimony in SUPPORT of
Higher Education – Undocumented Students – Out-of-State Tuition Exemption Eligibility**

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Position: Favorable

February 28, 2024

Strong Schools Maryland is a network of education advocates that believe that systems impacting our state’s students must treat them justly so they can thrive – that includes the higher education system. **Strong Schools Maryland urges a favorable vote on SB 637**, which expands in-state tuition eligibility for undocumented students. Undocumented students, due to their immigration status, are not always eligible for in-state tuition, even if they have lived and went to school in Maryland their whole life¹. Out-of-state tuition rates vary, but they’re often two or three times higher than in-state rates creating large financial barriers to accessing post-secondary education¹.

The third pillar of the Blueprint, College and Career Readiness, imagines a Maryland where students of all racial and socioeconomic backgrounds have equitable access to high-quality higher education opportunities. SB637, as introduced, would amend and improve the law to lower the three-year requirement that an individual or individual’s parent or legal guardian must provide documentation of Maryland income tax return filings to the taxable (one) year immediately before the academic year in which the tuition rate exemption would apply.

Senate Bill 637:

- Expands postsecondary opportunities, educational and professional prospects, and improves socioeconomic mobility for Maryland’s undocumented students and their families.
- Aligns Maryland policies with the college enrollment and access policies of 11 U.S. states (AZ, CA, CO, FL, IL, MA, NV, NJ, NY, TX, WA) with large shares of undocumented students that currently extend in-state resident tuition to students with no requirement to show proof of state income tax returns for student eligibility¹.

The Blueprint for Maryland’s Future envisions a World-Class public school system where all students can succeed. SB637 represents a step in the right direction to easing roadblocks for undocumented students – who are often students of color and from low-income families – to access the promises of higher education.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 637.

For more information, contact Riya Gupta at riya@strongschoolsmaryland.org

¹ [Education Trust. 2023](#)

MD2024_FavorableTestimony_SB637.pdf

Uploaded by: sharlimar douglass

Position: FAV



February 23, 2024

The Honorable Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair
The Honorable Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

RE: Support for SB637 (Undocumented Students - Out-of-State Tuition Exemption Eligibility)

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, Committee Members, and Bill Sponsors,

The Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education (MAREE), a coalition of education advocacy, civil rights, and community-based organizations committed to eliminating racial disparities in Maryland's education system, is pleased to submit favorable testimony in support of SB637 as introduced by Senators Brooks and Hettleman.

Maryland students of all racial and socioeconomic backgrounds deserve equitable access to pursuing higher education opportunities, and we value our state's extension of in-state tuition privileges to undocumented students who meet specific criteria under current law. SB637, as introduced, would amend and improve the law to lower the three-year requirement that an individual or individual's parent or legal guardian must provide documentation of Maryland income tax return filings to the taxable (one) year immediately before the academic year in which the tuition rate exemption would apply. If successfully passed, reducing the three-year income tax requirement by two years would lessen current barriers to postsecondary opportunities and, by extension, increase educational and professional prospects and improve socioeconomic mobility for Maryland's undocumented students, including DACA recipients, and their families.

A February 2023 analysis by EdTrust¹ of key college enrollment and access policies for the 15 U.S. states with the largest shares of undocumented students – including 13 (AZ, CA, CO, FL, IL, MD, MA, NV, NJ, NY, TX, VA, and WA) that currently extend in-state resident tuition to those students – found that no other states in this cohort but Maryland and Virginia require undocumented families to show proof of state income tax returns for student eligibility. Even then, Virginia law only requires two years of tax evidence. In contrast, the other 11 states with the largest shares of undocumented students granting in-state resident tuition access to these students do not require such a burden of proof. Thus, while SB637 represents a step in the right direction to easing roadblocks for undocumented students – who are often students of color and from low-income families – to access the promises of higher education, MAREE encourages further legislative consideration (whether by amendment to this bill or future legislation) of removing this burden altogether like leading peer states.

¹ "Higher Education Access and Success for Undocumented Students Start with 9 Key Criteria," The Education Trust, https://edtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/UndocuReport_Combined_FINAL_2.pdf

As your committee considers SB637 next week, we hope you will keep our testimony and the students and families this policy impacts in mind. Removing barriers to higher education for undocumented students in Maryland is not just an act of compassion for a population already facing significant systemic challenges, but represents a step towards building a stronger, more inclusive, and more prosperous state where all can thrive. By strengthening equitable access to postsecondary opportunities, we unlock the potential of these students to further contribute to our economy, enrich our society, and fulfill their educational and professional aspirations. **We urge you to support SB637 and prioritize policies that uphold education equity and access as a fundamental right for all Marylanders, regardless of immigration status, for the betterment of our state and its future.**

Sincerely,

The Maryland Alliance for Racial Equity in Education (MAREE)

Feb, 28 MGA Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Yasmine Juhar

Position: FAV

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,

My name is Yasmine Juhar, a resident of District 14 and a Montgomery College Takoma Park/Silver Spring campus student. I am here on behalf of MC Raptors for Immigrant Rights, a student club I started solely for the purpose to advocate and serve the communities most underrepresented. I see the value and importance of protecting and aiding the people who have continued to contribute, since Maryland has over 11,970 undocumented students in higher education every year and a little over 2,000 undocumented high schoolers graduating every year (Higher Ed Immigration Portal, 2024). Many of which attend Montgomery College or have the hopes and dreams of attending. Unfortunately, the reality is that the current MD Dream Act still restricts so many other young immigrant students from applying due to the 3 year tax requirement. Changing the requirement to 1 year would allow more students to attend public Maryland institutions like Montgomery College and contribute to the rich culture we have in our campuses, and may even join or create clubs like ours.

I say all this to encourage you in using your power to service this community. We can not say Maryland is a sanctuary for immigrants, and yet they are away from services that would greatly benefit them and make their journeys to whatever aspirations lie within their reach, possible. Again, you have the power to push forth a bill that could alleviate some of the burdens faced in our community.

I encourage you all to vote yes and pass SB0637 and allow undocumented students the access to an affordable college experience.