



Testimony - HB 207, Higher Education - Undocumented Students -
Out-of-State Tuition Exemption Eligibility
Favorable

House Appropriations Committee

January 21, 2025

Christopher C. Cano, MPA

Director of Political & Legislative Affairs on Behalf of SEIU Local 500

Honorable Chairman Barnes and Members of the House Appropriations Committee:

As a diverse union of over 23,000 workers, we know that diversity is our strength. This nation has made progress in appreciating the diversity of its people and our state of Maryland has helped lead the way in recent years. The issue of comprehensive immigration reform remains in limbo over the lack of political will in the United States Congress. Yet here in Maryland, we have been able to move the needle forward by helping those students who were brought to this nation by their parents, regardless of their immigration status. Undocumented students attend our local schools and many of those that graduate move onto institutions of higher learning.

Here in Maryland, we offer in-state tuition for those undocumented students whose parents or they themselves file a Maryland income tax return in the three years preceding their tuition exemption. HB 207 proposes to reduce that time frame to two years. When you contemplate the necessity of this legislation, think about your own adolescence. For many, post-graduation from high school is the first opportunity to make it out on your own. Being at the mercy of your parents political status is difficult enough, having the opportunity to stake out on your own in the workforce or college is no easy feat either. This bill will reduce the bureaucratic red-tape for undocumented students associated with something that all graduates of a Maryland high school should have: in-state tuition at our institutions of higher learning.

At a time where xenophobic rhetoric prevails throughout national politics, it should be Maryland that leads the way in creating an environment where all those who contribute to our communities feel safe and valued, regardless of political status.

I ask you to support HB 207 and pass it out of this committee with a favorable vote.

Thank you,

Christopher C. Cano, MPA
Director of Political & Legislative Affairs
SEIU Local 500