

Testimony in Support of House Bill 611: Institutions of Higher Education - Mandatory Disclosures for New and Prospective Students (Informed Enrollment Act)

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

My name is Omar Alexander Escudero. I am a Latino, first-generation, undergraduate Government and Politics, and pre-law minor student at the University of Maryland, College Park. I am grateful to be on the path I am, but I would have benefited from having the information required in HB 611 when deciding on a school to attend and my course of study.

HB 611 requires institutions of higher education to link to the Department of Education Scorecard and share information relating to the cost of attendance, graduation rates, salary outcomes, and debt outcomes. The bill requires this information be shared at various junctures in a prospective and current student's life cycle at the university. Deciding on a school and course of study can be a daunting task and have far reaching implications. Having access to more information allows students and their parents to make more informed decisions and better prepare for the future.

Especially as a first-gen student paying his way through school, navigating the admissions and decision process would have been made easier with the information in HB 611 front and center. A [2022 study published in the Journal of College Student Retention](#) examined first-gen undergraduate outcomes, and found that they were not only less financially and academically prepared for college, but the most likely group to drop out due to financial reasons (this was expressed in values between -1 and 2, lowest meaning persist behavior and highest meaning likelihood of leaving higher education). Being able to evaluate my year-to-year expenses would be invaluable to me since I do it alone.

When applying to colleges, I knew I would have the sole responsibility of my expenses - all the costs of my tuition, my housing, food, and utilities. As such, I made decisions that would enable me to accomplish my goals. This translates into me packing almost 60 hours of work, school, and overnight shifts into my week to make ends meet financially - I am a legislative aide for a member of the House, a manager-in-training at a grocery store, and represent off-campus outlying students in the UMD Student Government Association.

I am lucky to have the opportunity to make an investment in myself and am willing and able to make sacrifices for my future. However, I know how valuable this cost information would have been for my decision-making process and hope future students and their families have this greater access to cost information when starting the college process especially considering the looming challenges ahead to our state's economy, every bit of information to evaluate my future counts.

I urge a favorable report on **House Bill 611**. Thank you.

Omar Alexander Escudero