



Testimony - HB 473, Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship Program -
Revisions
Favorable

House Appropriations Committee

January 30, 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:

SEIU Local 500 represents over 23,000 workers across Maryland including faculty at our community colleges. Our members have seen first hand the success that students can achieve in their careers by developing their skills and education at our community colleges. We therefore express our strong support for the proposed extension of the Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship Program to include students enrolled in noncredit vocational certificates and licensing programs, as well as to provide part-time students with up to six years to complete their associate's degrees and maintain their scholarship eligibility.

Noncredit vocational certificates and licensing programs are crucial in preparing individuals for in-demand careers in industries such as healthcare, technology, manufacturing, and skilled trades. In addition, this will extend to those students in apprenticeship programs. These programs provide practical, hands-on training that leads directly to employment opportunities, and they often require specialized knowledge that is not necessarily offered through traditional degree programs. By extending the Promise Scholarship to these vocational focus programs, we are acknowledging the importance of these pathways and removing financial barriers that may otherwise prevent students from obtaining the skills necessary for a fulfilling and stable career.

Additionally, the proposed extension of the scholarship for part-time students is a much-needed adjustment. Many students, particularly adult learners, parents, or individuals working multiple jobs, may not be able to attend school full-time. The ability to maintain the scholarship for up to six years would allow these students to pursue their educational goals at a manageable pace without the added stress of financial instability. This flexibility would lead to more students graduating, contributing to a skilled workforce, and ensuring that Maryland remains competitive in attracting and retaining talent.

The Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship has already proven to be a life-changing program for many students, reducing the financial burden of higher education and opening doors to economic mobility. By expanding the eligibility to cover vocational certificates, apprenticeships, and part-time degree seeking students, we are making the program even more inclusive and effective in supporting a diverse range of learners. These changes will help ensure that all Marylanders have access to the education and skills they need to succeed in the workforce.

We ask you all to support HB 473 and thank Delegate Harris for his leadership on this issue. We urge you to vote yes and provide a favorable report on this bill.

Thank you for your consideration.

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