

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 1352
Sickle Cell Disease – Institutions of Higher Education – Policies, Procedures, and
Educational Campaigns
Presented to the Maryland General Assembly**

Good afternoon, Chair and esteemed members of the Maryland General Assembly,

My name is **Teanika Hoffman, MA, CHW**, and I am the **Founder and Executive Director of the Sickle Cell Coalition of Maryland**. As a **sickle cell warrior** and advocate, I strongly support House Bill 1352. Students with sickle cell disease (SCD) face significant challenges in higher education, including severe pain episodes, hospitalizations, and fatigue. Yet, many colleges lack clear policies and awareness to support them, leading to academic struggles and even discrimination.

I have personally witnessed students being denied excused absences for medical crises and struggling to access healthcare services that understand SCD. This bill will change that by:

This legislation will:

1. **Prevent Discrimination** – No student should be denied access to services or facilities due to their sickle cell diagnosis.
2. **Require Reasonable Accommodations** – Students with SCD need flexible attendance policies, access to medical care, and academic adjustments during health crises.
3. **Mandate Education and Awareness** – Faculty and staff must receive training to understand SCD, reducing stigma and fostering a more inclusive learning environment.
4. **Establish Uniform Procedures** – Colleges and universities will have clear guidelines on how to support students with SCD, ensuring consistency across institutions.

For far too long, students with sickle cell disease have been forced to advocate for themselves in an environment that does not fully understand their needs. This bill will change that. By passing House Bill 1352, Maryland will become a leader in promoting health equity in higher education, ensuring that students with SCD can pursue their academic dreams without unnecessary hardship.

I urge this committee to support and advance this vital legislation. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Teanika Hoffman, MA, CHW
Founder & Executive Director
Sickle Cell Coalition of Maryland