

Support HB207/SB268 – Higher Education - Undocumented Students - Out-of-State Tuition Exemption Eligibility

As a constituent, I encourage you as a member of the Appropriations Committee/Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to vote in favor of HB207/SB268 - Higher Education - Undocumented Students - Out-of-State Tuition Exemption Eligibility. This bill reduces the number of years for which an individual or the individual's parent or guardian must file taxes to be eligible to receive an out-of-state tuition exemption.

Since its implementation, the Maryland Dream Act has had a profound impact on the state's undocumented student population and the broader community. Some notable outcomes include:

- The availability of in-state tuition rates has led to a surge in enrollment among undocumented students at Maryland's public colleges and universities. This increase in enrollment not only benefits the students but also enriches the campus community by fostering greater diversity and inclusion.
- By enabling more students to pursue higher education, the Maryland Dream Act has also contributed to the state's economy. Graduates who benefit from the Act are better equipped to enter the workforce, secure higher-paying jobs, and contribute to the state's tax base. This, in turn, helps to strengthen Maryland's economy and improve the overall quality of life for its residents.
- The Dream Act has helped to bridge the gap between undocumented students and their documented peers, promoting a sense of belonging and acceptance within the community. As these students achieve academic success and become active participants in society, they serve as role models and advocates for future generations of immigrants.

My faith community, the Religious Society of Friends (or Quakers), includes more than 2000 Friends (Quakers) and more than 20 Meetings (or local faith communities) in Maryland, including my Meeting, the Patapsco Friends Meeting in Ellicott City. Quakers have existed in Maryland for more than 350 years and have a long history of advocating for our beliefs, often called “testimonies,” including the belief in equality and dedication to community. Although I do not speak for any Quaker other than myself, I am led to share with you that this bill reflects my belief in full and free access to education for all, no exceptions.

The expansion of Dream Act eligibility is a clear expression of my experience of Quaker testimonies, and a value that is clearly documented in Article 43 of the Maryland Declaration of Rights that encourages “the diffusion of knowledge and virtue, the extension of a judicious system of general education, the promotion of literature, the arts, sciences, agriculture, commerce and manufactures, and the general melioration of the condition of the People.”

Thank you for your consideration of my testimony. Please vote in favor of HB207/SB268.

Your Friend,

Erinn Camp Mansour