

**Testimony in SUPPORT of
Higher Education – Undocumented Students – Out-of-State Tuition Exemption Eligibility**

Energy, Education, and the Environment Committee

Position: Favorable

January 22, 2025

Strong Schools Maryland is a network of education advocates dedicated to ensuring that all systems, including higher education, that impact Maryland's students are equitable and accessible, enabling *all* students to thrive. **Strong Schools Maryland urges a favorable vote on SB 268**, which expands in-state tuition eligibility for undocumented students. Undocumented students often face exclusion from in-state tuition rates due to their immigration status, many of whom have lived in the State for their entire lives¹. While Out-of-state tuition rates vary, they're often two or three times higher than in-state rates, creating significant financial barriers to accessing these post-secondary education pathways¹.

The third pillar of the Blueprint, College and Career Readiness, envisions and promises a Maryland where students of all racial and socioeconomic backgrounds have equitable access to high-quality higher education opportunities. SB 268 proposes an improvement to the current standing of the law by reducing the requirement for an individual or their legal guardian to provide documentation of Maryland income tax filings from three years to two years prior to the academic year in which the tuition exemption would apply.

Therefore, Senate Bill 268:

- Expands access to postsecondary opportunities and educational/professional prospects which fosters socioeconomic mobility for Maryland's undocumented students and their families.
- Aligns Maryland policies with the college enrollment and access policies of 11 U.S. states (AZ, CA, CO, FL, IL, MA, NV, NJ, NY, TX, WA) with large shares of undocumented students that currently extend in-state resident tuition to students with no requirement to show proof of state income tax returns for student eligibility¹.
 - In states that have moved towards or adopted tuition equity laws, such policies result in reduced high school drop out rates, increasing numbers of graduates pursuing post secondary opportunities, and generally raises student/familial incomes².

The Blueprint for Maryland's Future envisions a public school system that supports all students' access and success in college and career pathways. SB 268 represents a step towards removing barriers that undocumented students – many of whom are students of color or from low-income families – face in accessing higher education opportunities. Investing in undocumented students by working to eliminate obstacles to postsecondary opportunities is essential to building a more equitable and inclusive future for *all* Maryland students.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 268.

For more information, contact Kenzie Funk at kenzie@strongschoolsmaryland.org

¹ [Education Trust. 2023](#)

² [In-State Tuition for Undocumented Immigrant Students. 2024](#)