



Maryland Youth Advisory Council  
c/o Governor's Office Children  
100 Community Place,  
Crownsville, MD 21032

Alexander Hossainkhail, *Chair*  
Thomas Evans, *Vice-Chair*  
Folashade Epebinu, *Secretary*

January 20, 2025

**Re: SB82** | College Preparatory Programs and College Admissions Applications - Fees - Prohibition

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

The Maryland Youth Advisory Council prides itself on being a coalition of diverse young advocates and leaders who serve as a voice for youth in the state of Maryland. As leaders in our communities, and as appointees of the Governor, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, Maryland Association of Student Councils, Maryland Higher Education Commission, and the University System of Maryland, we take every opportunity to address relevant issues by influencing legislation, spreading public awareness and serving as a liaison between youth and policymakers regarding issues facing youth.

We are writing in support of **SB82** and requesting a favorable report by the Committee. **SB82** prohibits local boards of education from charging students fees for participating in competitive college preparatory programs, such as Advanced Placement (AP) courses or International Baccalaureate (IB) programs; further, the bill asserts that public universities in the state of Maryland shall not charge application fees to students attending approved public high schools. **SB82** allows high-achieving students to reach their goals more easily by eliminating financial barriers to applying and competing for college admission.

According to the most recently available data, in 2021, 43.6% of Maryland's graduating high school class took at least 1 AP exam<sup>1</sup>. Research has shown, and students have demonstrated, that those who participate in AP exams are more likely than their peers to attend college, and graduate on time. Moreover, the University System of Maryland (USM) received 67,076 in-state applicants in 2024, translating to an approximate savings of \$3,689,180 for applicants<sup>2</sup>. **SB82** reduces a primary barrier to entry—the starting point for getting a college degree. It has been shown that waiving college application fees induces high-achieving students from low-income backgrounds to apply to and be admitted to higher education institutions. **SB82** promotes students of all income levels to participate in high-level academic pursuits and to seek out higher education.

There exists a significant opportunity and achievement gap in our state, and financial barriers are a culprit in this issue. The AP participation rate between the three least participating counties was 43% that of the three most participating counties, and the income discrepancy between these same counties can be up to

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<sup>1</sup> Choudhury, M. (2022). "Maryland Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate, Advanced Placement, SAT and Postsecondary Enrollment." *Maryland State Department of Education*  
<https://www.marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Documents/2022/0322/AdjustedCohortGraduationRateAdvancedPlacementSATPostsecondaryEnrollment.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> University System of Maryland Data Journal Reports

100%. Finances are certainly a factor in academic program participation, and **SB82** acts in the best interest of low-income students, and the pursuit of equitable education.

Counties across the state have disproportionate standards when it comes to charging for competitive college preparatory programs. For example, while Montgomery County Public Schools cover the cost of all Advanced Placement exams, Howard County Public Schools charge up to \$98.00 per exam. Without financial constraints, Montgomery County Public School students are more likely to take Advanced Placement exams than Howard County Public Schools. This allows Montgomery County students, on average, greater opportunities to succeed in high school and beyond than their counterparts.

*Testing Schedule – HCPSS.* [www.hcpss.org/academics/testing/testing-schedule](http://www.hcpss.org/academics/testing/testing-schedule).

**SB82** allows all Maryland students equal access to AP, IB, and other advanced course exams by eliminating the financial burden on students and their families. The Council advocates for **SB82** as it aligns with the Council's Legislative Platform supporting:

- a. Bridge achievement gaps to ensure youth from diverse backgrounds can access high-level education and career guidance. (Article III, Higher Education, Clauses F, I, and K),
- b. Addressing disproportionate funding in and across districts to ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities. (Article III, Primary and Secondary Education, Clauses A, C, and G),

**SB82** grants, *we the students*, the opportunity to flourish in our education without financial burden. By prohibiting local boards of education from charging student fees for competitive college preparatory programs, Maryland allows students from all different backgrounds equal grounds for schooling and success and helps to alleviate the disproportionate standards across counties. For these reasons, the Maryland Youth Advisory Council **Supports SB82** and requests a favorable report from the committee. We thank you for doing your part to increase access to competitive college preparatory programs for students all across the state.

Sincerely,



Alexander Hossainkhail  
Chair, Maryland Youth Advisory Council