

March 7, 2025

Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair
Education, Energy, and Environment Committee Maryland General Assembly
11 Bladen St.
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: SB1024 - Higher Education - Nonresident Tuition - Exemption for Dependents of State or Local Public Safety Employees (Maryland Fallen Heroes Tuition Benefits Act)

Dear Senator Feldman and Senator Kagan,

My name is Jessica Portz, I am the widow of Officer Thomas Portz of the Baltimore City Police Department EOW 10-20-2010. I would like to tell you about things that my family has gone through and the things that were told to me after the death of my husband.

The day after my husband's death and for days weeks and years after, we were told that my family would be taken care of, that my children would not have to worry about college because there were programs and scholarships in place to take care of these things. All of this was told to me while I was sitting in the living room of my home in York County Pennsylvania. These things were not entirely true, not to say that I was lied to but the information was not completely accurate. The scholarship in place was for the families of Maryland State employees that lost their lives in the line of duty but did not apply to my children because even though he served the City of Baltimore we did not reside in the state of Maryland. With help from some wonderful people we were able to make it so that any surviving child of a Maryland agency would be eligible for this scholarship. My daughter then went on to attend the University of Towson, with the assistance of this scholarship. Unfortunately it was still a great financial hardship for myself because the scholarship only covers the cost of instate tuition and we again live in Pennsylvania so were charged out of state tuition.

We do not ask for a great deal from anyone, we do not demand to be taken care of or look for anything unreasonable, but we have been told for years that this would be something that would be available to us. We are a few numbers that would benefit from this exemption, and only look for what was told we were to receive.

Thank you for considering this legislation. I respectfully ask the Environment and Transportation Committee for a favorable report of SB1024.

Sincerely,

Jessica Portz

Jessica Portz
Widow of Officer Thomas Portz
Baltimore City Police Department
Western District
EOW 10-20-2010