



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB 82 - College Preparatory Programs and College Admissions Applications - Fees – Prohibition

SB 82 seeks to address these inequities by eliminating college application fees and the costs associated with preparatory programs, making higher education accessible to all students, regardless of socioeconomic background.

In pursuit of an equitable educational system, we must acknowledge the systemic barriers that prevent many students from reaching their full potential. The state of Maryland, renowned for its progressive educational goals, faces an insidious challenge that undermines its ambition: the financial barriers that restrict access to college preparatory programs and create insurmountable obstacles for low-income students applying to higher education institutions.

The statistics are staggering. In the 2017 school year, college-bound students collectively spent over \$504 million on application fees to four-year colleges, an expenditure that disproportionately burdens students from underserved communities. This figure—half a billion dollars—is a stark reminder of the financial exclusion many students face when considering higher education. Bill 82 aims to remove this barrier, ensuring that all students, particularly those from low-income families, can pursue their academic aspirations without the threat of financial strain.

Moreover, the bill's impact on college preparatory programs cannot be overstated. These programs help equip students with the skills necessary to thrive in a rigorous academic environment. However, fees associated with these programs often deter students from marginalized communities. By prohibiting counties from charging these fees, Bill 82 removes one of the most significant obstacles to academic success for students from underserved backgrounds.

Furthermore, the issue of application fees remains a critical barrier. Many low-income students hesitate to apply to multiple colleges due to the compounding cost of application fees, which can add up quickly when applying to several institutions. By prohibiting public higher education institutions from charging these fees for eligible students, Bill 82 provides a crucial opportunity for students to apply to a wider range of colleges, thereby increasing their chances of finding the best fit for their academic and professional futures.

It is important to note that this bill does not merely address educational inequality but takes a targeted and strategic approach to breaking down the financial barriers that disproportionately affect low-income students and students of color. By eliminating these fees, Bill 82 acts as a force for equity, ensuring that students no longer have to overcome the additional challenge of navigating financial burdens just to pursue a college education.

It is time for Maryland to set an example by removing these financial obstacles and ensuring that every student, regardless of their background, has the opportunity to succeed. By passing SB 82, we will be taking a critical step toward a more inclusive, equitable, and prosperous future for our state and nation.

Therefore, I respectfully request a favorable committee report on SB 82.