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BILL: SB0268 Higher Education - Undocumented Students - Out-of-State Tuition Exemption Eligibility

DATE: January 22, 2025

POSITION: FAVORABLE

COMMITTEE: Energy, Education, and the Environment

CONTACT: Joe Toolan | joe@annapolispride.org

Annapolis Pride's mission is to advocate for, empower, and celebrate the LGBTQ+ community in Anne Arundel County to live fully and authentically. Our vision is a safe, equitable, and anti-racist community where people of all identities thrive.

As such, the Board of Directors of Annapolis Pride **supports** Senate Bill 268, reducing the number of years from 3 to 2 in which an individual or their parents or guardians must file taxes in the state of Maryland to be eligible to pay in-state tuition at Maryland educational institutions.

Students who are not documented are ineligible for federal financial assistance for higher education, including student loans. Nevertheless, they and their families are contributing to the economy and tax-base of the state of Maryland. Therefore, reducing the number of years from three to two years allows these students to enter higher education sooner, and subsequently contribute more to the state's economy due to the higher earning potential after completing tertiary education.

Maryland's community colleges and universities are among the best in the nation. Enabling undocumented students to attend these institutions for vocational training and for academic degrees is beneficial to the state and to its economy. Undocumented students are frequently employed in one or more jobs while attending tertiary education. Therefore, they continue to contribute to the tax base while benefitting from paying in-state tuition.

Approximately 300,000 people, or 3% of all undocumented immigrants in the United States are members of the LGBTQIA+ community, according to the Williams Institute at UCLA Law. This sub-group of undocumented immigrants is even more vulnerable because of the discrimination they may have experienced in their home countries and the rising challenges faced in the United States. By allowing undocumented individuals to pay in-state tuition for training, the LGBTQ members are also able to improve their situations and, potentially, avoid the statistics of higher unemployment, higher homelessness, and higher rates of abuse that plague the community.

Accordingly, Annapolis Pride respectfully requests a **favorable** committee report on Senate Bill 268.