



February 21, 2025

Good Afternoon, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee.

My name is Joseph Fisher. I am the Founder and CEO of First Generation College Bound. I also serve as the Chair of the Maryland Alliance for College Affordability and Equity. Maryland Alliance is a coalition of non-profit organizations throughout Maryland that assist students from low-income - first generation and marginalized families pursuing higher education.

I am pleased to testify on behalf of the Maryland Alliance for College Affordability and Equity to support **SB552 High School Graduation Requirements-Financial Aid Application**. Maryland Alliance will support this legislation, due to FAFSA completion being critical to our success. It enables our students to receive the financial aid needed to attend an affordable college to graduate. There is no doubt Maryland FAFSA completion will have a state wide impact as the National College Attainment Network this year stated in their report that the rate for low-income students completing the FAFSA is getting stronger. As a result more students, especially low to moderate income students qualified for Pell Grants for the 2024-2025 school year.

Due to Maryland Alliance supporting FAFSA completion, we have contributed to the Pell Grant increase nationally partnering with our schools and the Maryland Higher Education Commission promoting FAFSA awareness and providing completion support to our students. However, it is important you know while FAFSA completion is important there is a need for the students and the parents to understand the FAFSA Summary Page. Maryland Alliance members provide this required support developing a college affordability strategic plan for our students to attend college and graduate with little to no debt. While a student has hopes and dreams to attend college, especially low income it will be challenging if the

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FAME – Foundation for the Advancement of Music & Education

First Generation College Bound, Inc.  
Hillside Family of Agencies  
It takes a Village to Help Our Children, Inc.  
Joes Movement  
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FAFSA is not completed on time. FAFSA in Maryland for priority scholarships is annually due on March 1<sup>st</sup>.

In closing, Maryland Alliance supports SB552 for FAFSA/MSFAA completion as it will contribute greatly to more students attending an affordable college and graduating. However, Maryland Alliance is concerned about the required regulations. This is due to our knowledge, and years of experience with FAFSA completion and knowing the challenges of our schools, especially counselors. As a result Maryland Alliance is requesting an opportunity to provide input for regulation input. We know with the right regulations our Maryland Schools will not be too overwhelmed to achieve FAFSA/MSSFA completion success. Honoring this request would be most appreciated as Maryland Alliance supports SB 522 with an opportunity for regulation input.

Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to testify on the behalf of the Maryland Alliance for College Affordability and Equity.

Joseph Fisher

Chair

Maryland Alliance for College Affordability and Equity.

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