



**Testimony in FAVOR of HB 1530
Education - Higher Education - Undocumented Students –
Out-of-State Tuition Exemption Eligibility**

Committee on Appropriations
March 11, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair Barnes and Members of the Committee,

We Are CASA is pleased to offer **favorable testimony** in strong support of **HB 1530, Education - Higher Education - Undocumented Students - Out-of-State Tuition Exemption Eligibility**.

We Are CASA is a national powerhouse organization building power and improving the quality of life in working-class: Black, Latino/a/e, Afro-descendent, Indigenous, and Immigrant communities. With a membership of over 190,000 members, CASA creates change with its power-building model blending human services, community organizing, and advocacy to serve the full spectrum of the needs, dreams, and aspirations of members. CASA provides multiple education services to youth and adult immigrants in Maryland including college and career readiness, workforce and life skills ESOL, and vocational training.

Undocumented CASA youth leaders played a pivotal role in advocating for the passage of the Maryland Dream Act, standing at the forefront of the movement. Their courageous activism and tireless efforts helped shed light on the importance of providing opportunities for undocumented students to pursue higher education. Currently, thousands have benefitted from this program. However, inequities still remain.

House Bill 1530 proposes to further equitable access to higher education by eliminating the tax return requirement for in-state tuition eligibility while continuing to use graduation from a Maryland high school or GED program as demonstration of Maryland residency. This update removes a critical barrier to higher education, especially for students facing complex family dynamics, unaccompanied youth, and recent arrivals.

We Are CASA operates robust youth education programs throughout our footprint actively engaging with first and second-generation immigrant youth through various programs designed to support their academic journeys, foster leadership skills, and provide a culturally responsive college and career readiness curriculum. We assist students in applying to colleges, applying for financial aid, and developing personalized plans to help them transition to their post-secondary

endeavors. We support students in qualifying for the Maryland Dream Act and the state financial aid application, MHEC One-App (formerly MSFAA). Currently, the University of Maryland's in-state tuition rate is \$12,008 contrasting starkly with the steep rate of \$41,974 demanded for out-of-state tuition¹. Although not as steep, community college tuition rates also vary depending on in-state or out-of-state designations. Immigrant Marylanders who have completed their K-12 education in our public school system and aspire to further their academic pursuits encounter a significant hurdle upon their high school graduation if their parents or guardian are unable to provide tax records during the post-secondary enrollment process.

While removing the tax return requirement to access in-state and in-county tuition rates will remove a significant prohibitive burden, it is important to note that many Maryland youth will continue to face economic barriers to post-secondary education if alternative options beyond tax returns are not permitted to demonstrate economic standing when applying for Maryland financial aid through the MHEC One-App.

Furthermore, students have faced a third barrier in accessing higher education when confronted with inconsistent and inequitable admissions processes at each individual Maryland institute of higher education. To address this inconsistency, We Are CASA respectfully requests that MHEC create a standardized college enrollment process for Maryland Dreamers.

House Bill 1530's adjustment to residency verification is a fundamental revision needed to achieve the true intent of the Maryland Dream Act with fairness, inclusivity, and equal access to education. It is a compassionate and practical solution, recognizing the unique challenges faced by immigrant students.

Moreover, the positive impact of this adjustment extends beyond individual students, positively impacting Maryland's workforce and economy. Nationally and here in Maryland, we are facing a worker shortage in all fields, including healthcare and education. Data shows that 25.3% of Maryland's health care and social assistance workforce are immigrants². An accessible higher education system leads to a more diverse and skilled workforce, contributing significantly to the overall growth and prosperity of our state.

For all these reasons, CASA respectfully asks the committee to issue a favorable report on HB 1530.

¹ <https://admissions.umd.edu/tuition/cost-of-attendance>

²

<https://map.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/locations/maryland/#:~:text=Healthcare,who%20are%20foreign%2Dborn%2039.3%25>