

Written Testimony in Support of HB1530
Higher Education - Undocumented Students - Out-of-State Tuition
Exemption Eligibility

To: Chair Ben Barnes, Vice Chair Anne R. Kaiser and Members of the Maryland House Appropriations Committee

From: Shannon Montague: Baltimore City Schools Teacher

A student's opportunity to attend college should be based on their hard work and academic success, not on their parents' immigration paperwork or tax filing status. As a high school teacher, I have personally seen how Maryland's current tax documentation requirements for undocumented families have blocked several dedicated, capable students from continuing their education and currently have students in my classroom now who will face the same obstacle unless the law changes.

HB1530 would help create a fairer process. It does not provide special advantages. Instead, it removes some, though not all, of the extra requirements that undocumented students currently face. These students would still need to submit the same documentation for loans and in-state tuition that other Maryland students must provide.

Under the current system, even students who have the required documentation often struggle to enroll in college. Those whose parents have filed taxes for three years still face a complicated and burdensome process. Undocumented students must first apply to Maryland universities as out-of-state applicants. If they are admitted, they remain classified as out-of-state students until they complete additional steps. Their parents must file Form 129 with the Maryland Comptroller's Office to obtain three years of tax returns and then request separate copies for every college the student has been accepted to.

The timeline creates additional challenges. Students are required to submit the previous year's tax return even when the filing deadline has not yet passed. At the same time, they must work through the financial aid process, which often requires submitting much of the same information again. As a teacher who helps students through these steps, I regularly see how overwhelming this process can be, especially when students are translating forms and explaining complex requirements to parents who are not fluent in English.

This is a barrier that many capable students cannot overcome on their own. I urge this committee to act now. Delaying action for another year will mean another group of deserving students losing the opportunity to pursue a college education.

Respectfully submitted,

Shannon Montague