

TO: The Honorable Ben Barnes, Chair
Appropriations

HB214
Unfavorable

FROM: Stephen J. Gange
Executive Vice Provost, Johns Hopkins University

Janet Simon Schreck
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Innovation, Johns Hopkins University

DATE: February 20, 2026

RE: HB214: Higher Education – Academic Forgiveness Policy - Established

Johns Hopkins respectfully opposes **HB214 Higher Education – Academic Forgiveness Policy**. This well-intentioned bill would require Maryland’s colleges and universities to disregard an applicant’s unsatisfactory or failing grades if they were earned at a prior institution of higher learning seven or more years prior to an admissions process.

Johns Hopkins University employs a holistic admissions process when evaluating applicants to all its undergraduate and graduate programs. Prior academic performance is never used as the sole deciding determinant for admission. As part of that process, applicants are consistently afforded opportunities to explain any problematic issues or grades in their previous studies.

As written, this legislation would require institutions to ignore any failures in undergraduate and/or master’s programs for students who choose to pursue master’s or doctoral programs at a later point in their lives. Considering specific failures is very important in assessing whether a candidate is likely to be successful in the academic program. For example, if a student is applying to a doctoral program where independent research is required for program completion, prior failure in previous undergraduate and/or graduate research courses poses a significant concern that the student is not prepared for doctoral level research and will, therefore, not be successful. Admitting a student to a program who is at-risk for not successfully completing it is inequitable and potentially causes financial burden if the student ultimately isn’t successful. Moreover, failing grades may also signal other issues that are not visible to admissions reviewers, such as academic misconduct.

Holistic admission review, by definition and in practice, is a comprehensive, multi-faceted application review process where universities evaluate an applicant's "whole" self—including academic trajectory, personal character, experiences, and background—rather than relying solely on GPA and test scores. A policy that prohibits universities to do so places students at risk in terms of success and completion and may compromise program quality and compliance with accreditation standards that require institutions to admit students whose abilities are congruent with educational offerings.

Accordingly, Johns Hopkins respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report on HB214.