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Written Testimony in Support of HB1530

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

From: Chelsea Zou, Baltimore City Public School Teacher

Hello, my name is Chelsea Zou, and I am a Baltimore City Public Schools teacher. I have been teaching third grade at a Title I elementary school for the past nine years. Each day I work with students who are bright, curious, and resilient. The first group of students I ever taught are 12th graders and will be graduating this year. I am submitting written testimony to support HB1530, which would remove the requirements that undocumented students must submit three years of their parents' tax returns to qualify for in-state tuition and federal loans.

A child's right to high-quality and affordable education is one of the most important pillars of this country. I imagine a student who has applied to one of our state's public institutions, and then been accepted. I then imagine their disappointment and frustration at finding out their inability to afford and attend college has resulted from missing tax returns. This barrier has already been impacting students and stopping them from attaining their fullest potential. This could be the scenario for one of the students from my first year of teaching. As someone who educates students early in their educational journeys, I feel privileged to be part of the foundational years of a student's learning. I also very deeply know that this journey is already long, challenging, and often filled with obstacles for my students. It is devastating to think that, after overcoming a multitude of challenges and completing their K-12 schooling, a student's documentation status would prevent them from pursuing higher education.

Once again, I am asking you all to please consider passing HB1530 so that we can give undocumented students a fair chance at higher education. I want to emphasize the urgency of passing HB1530, since there are students this year who are hoping to attend college this fall. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,
Chelsea Zou