

Testimony on House Bill 1530 – Favorable

HB1530 – Higher Education – Undocumented Students – Out-of-State Tuition Exemption Eligibility

Appropriations Committee

March 9, 2026

Dear Honorable Delegate Ben Barnes, Vice Chair Delegate Anne R. Kaiser and Members of the Committee,

My name is Aviva Thal, and I am a resident of Baltimore City, Maryland. I am writing in support of HB1530 – Out-of-State Tuition Exemption.

I work for a college access non-profit in a Baltimore City school where a large percentage of the students are undocumented immigrants. In my work, I see on a daily basis the ways in which the tax filing requirement for undocumented families to receive in state tuition prevents students from furthering their education.

There are many reasons students or their families are unable to file the necessary taxes to qualify. Following are the cases of several of my students, with their names changed to protect privacy.

Maria has a 3.8 GPA and ranks 3rd in her class. She has been accepted to multiple 4 year universities. Although her mother started filing taxes as soon as she arrived in the US, they moved to the US in 2024, meaning they are one tax year short of the 3 year requirement to qualify for in-state tuition. Raul is a 19 year old student who lives by himself. In addition to attending high school, he works full time in order to support himself. Although he is filing his taxes for 2025, he is struggling to pay for his basic necessities, and cannot afford to backfile for 2023 and 2024 in order to qualify for in-state tuition. Ana moved out of her mother's house because it was an abusive environment. Her mother refuses to share Ana's documents, including tax returns, with her, meaning she is unable to apply for state aid or in-state tuition. If she were a US citizen, she would qualify for aid as an independent student, but as an immigrant, she slips through the cracks. Henry's family used to file taxes, but starting last year, they stopped out of fear that the IRS would share their information with immigration enforcement. No family should have to choose between protecting their privacy and safety, and giving their child the opportunity to continue their education. This is the choice that Henry's family was forced to make.

Every day, I work with talented, motivated, hard working immigrant students for whom college is financially out of reach due to circumstances out of their control. Eliminating the tax filing requirement for the in-state tuition exemption would be life changing for students across Maryland.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report on HB1530.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Aviva Thal
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