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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: Gavin Buckland - A Concerned Citizen

Hello, my name is Gavin Buckland, a resident of Baltimore City. I write to you as a concerned citizen who works within the medical device industry, and as an individual who has benefitted greatly through continued education. The single most powerful tool an individual can wield in order to better themselves is pursuing higher education. Because of this, 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.

I am a firm believer of merit and achievement as a barometer of the ability to attend university, not the immigration status of themselves or of their parents. The current legal reality in Maryland is the opposite: Hardworking, dedicated students are presented an undue burden limiting their ability to pursue what I believe to be one of the most critical paths to better themselves and their families. I would not be in the place I am today as an individual without the opportunity to attend a state university, and it is unfair that these individuals face this barrier.

Even when students furnish the documentation needed (three years of their parents tax returns), Undocumented students must first apply as out-of-state residents to Maryland universities. Then, if accepted, they remain classified as out-of-state students. To change that status, parents must file Form 129 with the Maryland Comptroller's Office to obtain three years of tax returns and must request a separate copy for each school their child was accepted to. Making things even more difficult, they must submit tax returns for the previous year, even if the taxes are not due yet. For example, students who are planning to attend in the fall of 2026 must submit tax returns for 2025. Yet, 2025 tax returns are not due until mid April. After a student obtains each set of tax returns, they must submit them in-person or via mail to each university. At the same time, the student has to navigate the loan process, duplicating much of the same paperwork for the

MHEC One App. The process is extremely difficult and students are often attempting to overcome this bureaucracy by working with parents who are not fluent in English.

Perhaps most concerning about all of this: These individuals and their families are actively contributing to state revenue through taxes, yet are unable to access the services one makes in paying taxes in the first place. Should they withhold those taxes in the first place, they are punished through wage garnishment and other means. Yet, even when following the law and contributing to the greater whole of Maryland, they are punished by being unable to leverage a key benefit of being a state resident. This is an injustice that cannot wait. Each year this continues, deserving students are denied the ability to further their education goals.

Respectfully,

Gavin Buckland