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**HB 214 - Higher Education - Academic Forgiveness Policy – Established
February 24, 2026**

Chair Barnes and Members of the Committee,

For the record, I am Delegate Anne Healey, and I am seeking your support in favor of HB 214 - Higher Education - Academic Forgiveness Policy – Established.

HB 214 establishes a structured academic forgiveness policy so that unsatisfactory or failing grades earned more than seven years ago do not permanently prevent otherwise qualified Marylanders from re-entering higher education.

This bill is about access — not erasure. A student's complete academic record remains intact. Institutions retain full transcripts for advising, placement, and prerequisite review. Degree requirements, academic standards, and graduation criteria remain unchanged. The bill simply ensures that an outdated academic record does not function as a permanent admissions barrier for a student who is now ready to succeed.

Many students leave for reasons unrelated to ability — military service, family illness, financial hardship, or caregiving responsibilities. Years later, they return with maturity and stability. HB 214 recognizes that growth.

Because this Committee appropriately focuses on fiscal and compliance safeguards, I want to briefly explain how this intersects with federal financial aid.

Most students rely on federal student aid authorized under Title IV of the Higher Education Act. To receive that aid — Pell Grants and federal student loans — institutions must enforce Satisfactory Academic Progress, often referred to as SAP. Federal law requires three measures:

- A minimum cumulative GPA,
- Completion of at least 67 percent of attempted credits, and
- A maximum timeframe limit of 150 percent of program length — meaning a 120-credit degree cannot exceed 180 attempted credits for aid eligibility.

Those standards are set in federal regulation and remain fully in effect regardless of this bill.

Academic forgiveness under HB 214 affects admissions reviews and institutional academic standing. It does not erase attempted credits for federal purposes, and it does not override Title IV requirements. A student who receives academic forgiveness must still meet federal SAP standards to receive aid.

To make that explicit and protect institutions, I am prepared to support clarifying amendment language stating:

“Nothing in this section shall require an institution to alter or disregard coursework for purposes of determining eligibility for federal student financial assistance under Title IV of the Higher Education Act, and determinations of Satisfactory Academic Progress shall be made in accordance with applicable federal law and regulation.”

This ensures that:

- Federal compliance remains intact,
- Institutions retain authority over SAP determinations, and
- There is no audit or repayment risk created by this policy.

Students would also receive notice that academic forgiveness does not automatically restore federal financial aid eligibility and that appeal rights under federal SAP rules remain available. Institutions administer and enforce their own SAP policies in accordance with federal regulations. They retain authority over

how SAP is evaluated and how appeals are handled, but they must remain compliant with Title IV requirements under 34 C.F.R. § 668.34.

HB 214 is a responsible second-chance completion policy. It preserves academic standards, protects federal compliance, strengthens workforce re-engagement, and uses existing institutional infrastructure.

I respectfully request a favorable report and look forward to working with the Committee on clarifying language to ensure full alignment with federal requirements. Thank you.