

Sponsor Testimony HB 214 UB

Uploaded by: Delegate Healey Delegate Healey

Position: FAV

ANNE HEALEY
Legislative District 22
Prince George's County

Chair, Rules and Executive
Nominations Committee

Environment and Transportation
Committee

Subcommittees

Agriculture and Aquaculture

Motor Vehicle and Transportation

Non-Energy Utilities



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 361
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3961
800-492-7122 Ext. 3961
Anne.Healey@house.maryland.gov

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SPONSOR TESTIMONY

**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 The bill simply ensures that an outdated academic record does not function as a permanent admissions barrier for a student who is now ready to succeed.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.

Testimony in support of HB0214 - Higher Education

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

HB0214_RichardKaplowitz_FAV

02/24/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz
Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON HB#0214 – FAVORABLE

Higher Education - Academic Forgiveness Policy – Established

TO: Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser and members of the Appropriations Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard K. Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3. I am submitting this testimony in support of HB#0214, Higher Education - Academic Forgiveness Policy – Established

This bill recognizes that too often, students enrolled in institutions of higher education do not appreciate the value of their higher education experiences and, following a brief history of poor and failing grades, such students decide to pursue interests outside the academic world. Following a considerable passage of time, former students have a greater appreciation of higher educational opportunities and may seek to return to the institution only to find that the grades they acquired during their earlier experience act as a barrier and hindrance to their academic progress. So the purpose of this bill is to provide a mechanism for institutions of higher education to disregard the records of such students that prevent or impede their academic success. This bill recognizes that a student may acquire greater maturity and better skills after some time pursuing interests outside the academic world and decide to return to their abandoned studies.

The purpose of the bill is to provide a second chance to proceed with an academic study program for a returning student.

This bill meets that goal by requiring institutions of higher education to develop and implement an academic forgiveness policy on or before August 1, 2026, that applies to applicants who earned unsatisfactory or failing grades at a prior institution of higher education under certain circumstances.

In Maryland, we leave no one behind, and this law affirms that belief.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report and pass HB0214.

HB0214_MACC_FWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Drew Jabin

Position: FWA

House Appropriations Committee

February 24, 2026

HB 214 – Higher Education - Academic Forgiveness Policy - Established**Position: Favorable with Amendments**

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC), representing Maryland's 16 community colleges, supports **HB 214** with amendments. MACC appreciates the intent of this legislation to remove barriers for adult learners and returning students seeking to reengage with higher education after time away. Maryland's community colleges strongly support policies that expand access, promote second chances, and help students return to complete credentials that lead to meaningful employment and economic mobility.

Maryland's community colleges operate under an open-admissions model and already serve students regardless of prior academic performance. As open-access institutions, community colleges do not use selective admissions processes in the same way as four-year institutions. Students seeking to return to education after a period away can enroll without prior academic performance serving as a barrier to entry. Accordingly, the requirement to disregard prior grades during the admissions process would not meaningfully change access for community college students and would instead create additional administrative requirements where the underlying issue does not exist.

For these reasons, MACC respectfully requests an amendment to remove community colleges from the scope of HB 214 while preserving the bill's intent for institutions where admissions selectivity may pose barriers to returning students. Maryland's community colleges remain committed to supporting adult learners and students returning to higher education and look forward to continued collaboration with the sponsor and the General Assembly to expand access and support student success. For these reasons, MACC respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENT** report on **HB 214**.

Please contact Brad Phillips (bphillips@mdacc.org) or Drew Jabin (djabin@mdacc.org) with questions.

HB214_USM_UNF.pdf

Uploaded by: Andy Clark

Position: UNF



HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
House Bill 214
Higher Education – Academic Forgiveness Policy
February 24, 2026
Unfavorable

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on House Bill 214. The bill requires University System of Maryland (USM) institutions to develop and implement an academic forgiveness policy to disregard an applicant's unsatisfactory or failing grades earned at any prior institution more than seven years before an individual applies for admission.

The USM is comprised of twelve distinguished institutions and three regional centers. We award eight out of every ten bachelor's degrees in the State. Each of USM's 12 institutions has a distinct and unique approach to the mission of educating students and promoting the economic, intellectual, and cultural growth of its surrounding community. These institutions are located throughout the state, from western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, with the flagship campus in the Washington suburbs. The USM includes three Historically Black Institutions, comprehensive institutions and research universities, and the country's largest public online institution.

USM institutions support the spirit of this bill, and our institutions already have processes that account for previous academic work – including academic failure – in their admissions and readmissions processes. Applicants are reviewed holistically, and a prior failure does not preclude admission. Procedures vary from institution to institution, depending on institutional mission and potentially upon the program and the circumstances and details of the prior record. One failure of a particularly challenging course or failures during a particular period of time sandwiched by periods of success could be viewed differently from a steady series of failures, including at an introductory level. Or a young student may have failures followed much later by great success at a different institution. The bill would require all failures to be ignored equally.

Our institutions take into serious account previous academic work, but also life circumstances and demonstrated improvements. For example, the University of Maryland Global Campus and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore both have mechanisms under which they can invoke forgiveness after a five-year period of separation for many students. Other USM institutions also have academic clemency or forgiveness policies and procedures. These academic forgiveness policies may vary by level (undergraduate, graduate, professional) or by program. Certain licensing programs may add constraints to what is possible for a student.

We are concerned not only about access to higher education, but also about students' success in our programs – and the costs they incur to complete programs. Automatic disregard for previous failures may not be in the student's best interest. Access must be matched with effective support. A process that simply erases past missteps without engagement falls short. Policies for enrolled students who encounter challenges endeavor to provide students with the assistance they need to persist so they do not leave because of failure.

It is vital that as many students as possible participate in a quality higher education experience (access), but USM institutions want students to be successful in a cost-efficient manner. To achieve these goals, students must be reviewed, accepted, and supported in a manner sensitive to the students' individual contexts and to their program. A process that merely disregards a student's past challenges – even after many years – does not serve students, our institutions, or the State well.



MICUA - HB 214 Academic Forgiveness Policy - UNFAV

Uploaded by: Beatrix Peck

Position: UNF



Letter of Concern

House Appropriations Committee *HB 214 (Healy)* *Higher Education – Academic Forgiveness Policy - Established*

Matt Power, President
mpower@micua.org
February 24, 2026

On behalf of Maryland's independent colleges and universities and the more than 56,000 students we serve, thank you for the opportunity to provide a letter of opposition regarding [HB 214 \(Healy\) Higher Education – Academic Forgiveness Policy - Established](#). This bill would require Maryland colleges and universities to establish a policy whereby an applicant's grades earned seven or more years ago at a prior higher education institution could be disregarded in the admissions process.

While we support the general intent of this bill to help college students overcome prior academic challenges and difficulties, we are concerned that this legislation would undermine an institution's ability to support a student's successful transition into the institution. Without a full understanding of a student's past coursework and challenges, an institution will not know what support mechanisms may be needed to help ensure that student's successful re-entry into college. Academic advisors and faculty need to know a student's past academic performance in specific courses or disciplines to assist them in providing proper guidance for future course selection.

Further, we have serious concerns that this legislation could undermine an institution's ability to comply with eligibility and accountability standards for Title IV federal financial aid. Colleges and universities that participate in Title IV must ensure that students have the "ability to benefit" from their education and are able to make satisfactory academic process. There are also federal aid policies that govern the circumstances under which repeated courses may be included when determining a student's enrollment status, which is a key factor in determining the level and amounts of certain forms of federal financial aid. Institutions are not in a position to accurately make these determinations without access to a student's complete academic history.

While specific policies vary by institution, MICUA member institutions have processes and standards in place to evaluate and account for prior academic work in the admissions process. In reviewing a student's prior academic history, institutions consider not only grades, but also the level and difficulty of courses completed. Through the transfer admissions process, applicants may provide a qualitative explanation for their prior academic records, including low or failing grades in certain courses or a low semester or cumulative GPA. Some institutions directly prompt students to provide such explanations as part of their written essay for transfer admission.

The bill's core intention to ensure that students are not permanently disadvantaged by academic struggles from many years earlier is already achieved through holistic admissions review, which is standard practice across MICUA's colleges and universities. Admissions professionals routinely contextualize older coursework, discount grades that no longer reflect a student's readiness, and apply professional judgment on a case-by-case basis. Holistic review allows institutions to weigh these factors with discretion and compassion, balancing access with a responsibility to place students where they can succeed. HB 214, by contrast, replaces professional judgment with a rigid statutory rule, treating all older academic performance as categorically irrelevant regardless of context.

For all of these reasons, we urge an unfavorable Committee report for HB 214.

HB214 JHU Unfavorable Final.pdf

Uploaded by: Leslie Weber

Position: UNF

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.