



**SB 343 - County Boards of Education - Post College
and Career Readiness Pathways - Payment of Costs
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
February 18, 2026
SUPPORT**

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 343. This bill will establish income eligibility to assist students whose family is under 400% of the federal poverty level in paying fees associated with a certain post college and career readiness pathway.

The CASH Campaign of Maryland promotes economic advancement for low-to-moderate income individuals and families in Baltimore and across Maryland. CASH accomplishes its mission through operating a portfolio of direct service programs, building organizational and field capacity, and leading policy and advocacy initiatives to strengthen family economic stability. CASH and its partners across the state achieve this by providing free tax preparation services through the IRS program 'VITA', offering free financial education and coaching, and engaging in policy research and advocacy. **Almost 4,000 of CASH's tax preparation clients earn less than \$10,000 annually. More than half earn less than \$20,000.**

SB 343 provides Maryland schools with the flexibility that is needed to ensure that cost is not a barrier to participation in programs that lead to college readiness and long-term economic mobility. This flexibility provides the option for counties to cater to the needs of their area and to their students.

The fees and program costs can prevent students from low- and moderate-income families from participating fully. SB 343 aligns with the goals of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future by continuing to support equitable access while allowing county school systems to manage resources responsibly. While AP and IB exam fees are currently covered statewide, local systems continue to absorb significant costs to ensure student participation. SB 343 allows local discretion to target funding toward students with the greatest financial need, thus allowing schools to maintain access by reallocating limited resources to other priorities.

The approach of SB 343 recognizes that financial barriers do not end at graduation requirements, and that access to advanced coursework should not depend on a family's ability to pay. This recognition is especially important to student success, considering rising college tuition costs and the increasing burden of student loans.

The high cost of post-secondary education is a barrier that prevents many students from low to middle income families from attaining education post K-12. This has negative effects on the future potential earnings of students from low-to-middle income families. This is now compounded with changes that limit access to student loans on the federal level.

By reducing financial barriers to Post-CCR Pathways, SB 343 supports both economic stability for Maryland families and the readiness of future members of the workforce.

We respectfully encourage you to return a favorable report for SB 343.

Creating Assets, Savings and Hope