



Prepared Statement by Dr. John Barnshaw, Senior Leader with College Promise on Maryland Senate Bill 420

Dear Members of the Committee,

My name is John Barnshaw, and I am a Senior Leader at College Promise. College Promise is a national, nonpartisan nonprofit organization working to ensure all students can access the education and support they need to achieve social and economic mobility. Founded in 2015, we champion a growing network of “Promise programs”—local and statewide initiatives that help students afford college and succeed to and through college. Today, more than 450 Promise programs operate across all 50 states—a remarkable expansion from just 53 programs a decade ago.

I would like to share insights about SB 420 and how it impacts Promise students across Maryland.

Over the past two years, through my work at College Promise, I have collaborated with Promise programs, state legislatures and higher education professionals in Maryland and across the United States to better understand the landscape for student parents. Currently, there are six states that have passed legislation around statewide data collection, and this bill proposed would be among the most comprehensive to date.

Student parent data collection is essential for understanding the future of not only higher education in Maryland, but also the workforce. Today, I would like to discuss the importance of data collection not only for student mothers, but also student fathers.

In research that I published late last year, there are approximately three million undergraduate student parents, of which approximately 875,000 are fathers. In ten years time, the United States will be short more than 29.5 million jobs that require a postsecondary degree that are under the age of 55. I estimate that **10.4 million fathers** with high school diplomas or some college experience represent one of the largest target populations for potential college enrollment growth and securing greater prosperity for themselves, their families, and the state of Maryland. This substantial group includes both fathers who have never enrolled in higher education, and those who have started, but not completed their higher education journey, highlighting the significant potential for educational engagement and re-engagement among this population. What we know about student fathers is that they are more likely to be currently employed, more likely to be veterans, more likely to be working in an occupation that is aligned to their professional degree. In short, these student fathers make excellent candidates for the

workforce, yet there is a shortage of them in the state of Maryland and the United States with the in-demand skills. Maryland can help close this gap with SB 420.

In closing, I want to acknowledge that revisiting and refining higher education requires both courage and commitment. The willingness to improve upon what has already been accomplished in Maryland speaks to this committee's dedication to Maryland's students.

I thank you for your thoughtful consideration of these remarks and for your efforts to strengthen the support for student parents. As stated in SB 420, this bill seeks to improve data collection and planning for student parents. These goals align directly with College Promise's mission and with the needs we hear from students across the state.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide written testimony.

Thank you for your time and attention.

John Barnshaw, Ph.D.

Senior Leader, College Promise

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