



**Testimony in SUPPORT of
House Bill 1530: Higher Education – Undocumented Students – Out-of-State Tuition Exemption Eligibility**

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Position: Favorable with Amendments

April 1, 2026

At Strong Schools Maryland, we work to support the faithful implementation and full funding of the promises legislated through the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The Blueprint envisions a public education system where all students can access opportunity and build a strong foundation for their future. Ensuring that students who graduate from Maryland schools can pursue higher education is an essential part of that vision. For this reason, Strong Schools Maryland offers favorable testimony with amendments in support of **HB1530 – Higher Education – Undocumented Students – Out-of-State Tuition Exemption Eligibility.**

Many students who qualify for the Maryland Dream Act have attended Maryland schools for years and have built strong ties to their communities. Their courageous activism and tireless efforts helped shed light on the importance of providing opportunities for undocumented students to pursue higher education. Currently, thousands have benefitted from this program. However, the current tax documentation requirement can create barriers for students with complex family circumstances, including unaccompanied children or families who are unable to file tax returns.

House Bill 1530 as currently amended would increase access to higher education by reducing the tax return requirement for in-state tuition eligibility from three years to two years. This update removes a critical barrier to higher education, especially for students facing complex family dynamics, unaccompanied youth, and recent arrivals.

While the proposed reduction in the tax return requirement will allow us to support an even greater number of talented and motivated Maryland youth to access higher education, countless others will continue to be left behind due to the inability to afford post-secondary education even at in-state and in-county rates. As a result, we also support CASA amendments that would allow students to demonstrate financial standing through alternative documentation when applying for financial aid through the MHEC One-App such as W2s, 1099s, or employer verification in instances when a family's income is so limited that they are not required to file tax returns.

Ensuring equitable access to higher education benefits not only individual students but also the state as a whole. Maryland's workforce depends on a diverse and well-educated population, and many industries

across the state are facing workforce shortages. Expanding access to higher education helps ensure that talented students educated in Maryland's public schools can continue contributing to our communities and economy.

For all these reasons, Strong Schools Maryland respectfully asks the committee to issue a favorable report on HB 1530 with the requested amendments.

Please contact Kenzie Funk at kenzie@strongschoolsmaryland.org for additional questions.

