



**Testimony in FAVOR with AMENDMENTS of HB 1530  
Education - Higher Education - Undocumented Students –  
Out-of-State Tuition Exemption Eligibility**

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
April 1, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

We Are CASA is pleased to offer **favorable testimony with amendments** in strong support of **HB 1530, Education - Higher Education - Undocumented Students - Out-of-State Tuition Exemption Eligibility**.

We Are CASA is a national powerhouse organization building power and improving the quality of life in working-class: Black, Latino/a/e, Afro-descendent, Indigenous, and Immigrant communities. With a membership of over 190,000 members, We Are CASA creates change with its power-building model blending human services, community organizing, and advocacy to serve the full spectrum of the needs, dreams, and aspirations of members. We Are CASA provides multiple education services to youth and adult immigrants in Maryland including college and career readiness, workforce and life skills ESOL, and vocational training.

Undocumented We Are CASA youth leaders played a pivotal role in advocating for the passage of the Maryland Dream Act, standing at the forefront of the movement. 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, inequities still remain.

House Bill 1530 as currently amended proposes to further equitable 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.

We Are CASA operates robust youth education programs throughout our footprint actively engaging with first and second-generation immigrant youth through various programs designed to support their academic journeys, foster leadership skills, and provide a culturally responsive college and career readiness curriculum. We assist students in applying to colleges, applying for financial aid, and developing personalized plans to help them transition to their post-secondary

endeavors. We support students in qualifying for the Maryland Dream Act and the state financial aid application, MHEC One-App (formerly MSFAA).

While the proposed reduction in the tax return requirement will allow us to support an even greater number of talented and motivated Maryland youth access higher education and join our vibrant state workforce, 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. **Because of this, we respectfully request that the bill language be further amended to ensure those in need of financial aid are able to complete the MHEC One-App by providing two years of tax returns or alternative documentation such as W2s, 1099s, or employer verification in instances when a family or individual's income is so limited that they are not required to file tax returns.**

House Bill 1530's adjustments to residency verification and the proposed amendments to address eligibility for financial aid through the MHEC One-App are fundamental revisions needed to achieve the true intent of the Maryland Dream Act. They are a compassionate and practical solution, recognizing the unique challenges faced by immigrant students. The adjustments align with the principles of fairness, inclusivity, and equal access to education.

Moreover, the positive impact of these adjustments extends beyond individual students, positively impacting Maryland's workforce and economy. Nationally and here in Maryland, we are facing a worker shortage in all fields, including healthcare and education. Data shows that 25.3% of Maryland's health care and social assistance workforce are immigrants<sup>1</sup>. An accessible higher education system leads to a more diverse and skilled workforce, contributing significantly to the overall growth and prosperity of our state.

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

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<https://map.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/locations/maryland/#:~:text=Healthcare,who%20are%20foreign%2Dborn%2039.3%25>