



BLUEPRINT FOR
Maryland's Future

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BILL: Senate Bill 324

TITLE: Higher Education - Public Senior Higher Education Institutions - Direct Admission Program

SPONSOR: Senator Augustine

HEARING DATE: February 10, 2026

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment


POSITION: Information

The Accountability and Implementation Board for the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (AIB) submits this **letter of information** for **Senate Bill 324 - Higher Education - Public Senior Higher Education Institutions - Direct Admission Program**.

Senate Bill 324 establishes, for eligible high school students, a direct admissions program at participating constituent institutions of the University System of Maryland and the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science, Morgan State University, and St. Mary's College of Maryland and requires the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) to administer the program through its financial aid system and the Common Application. Further, the bill would require the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and MHEC to jointly establish a process for notifying MHEC of each high school student who has met the College and Career Ready (CCR) standard each school year and MHEC to establish a process to offer these students conditional direct admission from each participating institution based on several criteria.

Background

When the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education reported its recommendations to inform the development of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future Law, the typical Maryland student graduated from high school with about two and a half years less education than their peers in top-performing systems around the world. In fact, only around 40% of Maryland public high school graduates met the State's college and career readiness standards. The Commission developed a CCR standard to achieve two goals. First, to set an empirically based standard that would reflect a



student's readiness for postsecondary education and training. Second, to design a system that would enable students to reach this standard by the end of 10th grade (and no later than high school graduation). This standard and education system ensures access in the 11th and 12th grades to a broad array of high-quality, rigorous post-CCR pathways, equipping students for success in both college and career.

The Blueprint's CCR standard was never meant to indicate that a student could meet admissions requirements of four-year higher education institutions. Rather, the intent of the Blueprint CCR standard was meant to certify that those who reach it have acquired the content knowledge and skills that are necessary to succeed in both entry-level, credit-bearing courses at community colleges and job training programs. It also opens opportunities for students who, once they meet the standard, are able to embark on a post-CCR pathway, which can include enrollment in credit-bearing courses at Maryland community colleges or four-year post secondary institutions, in order to earn college credit and/or progress towards an industry recognized credential.

We hope that you find this information helpful as you consider **SB 324**. If you would like more information, please contact Joy Schaefer, Government Relations Director at joy.schaefer@maryland.gov or (410) 991-7623.