



*Advocates for Children and Youth is a statewide non-profit focused on improving the lives and experiences of Maryland's children through policy change and program improvement. We champion solutions to child welfare, education, health, and juvenile justice issues, positioning us to influence the full spectrum of youth experiences. This multi-issue platform helps us to improve the entirety of children's worlds—the systems they touch, the people they interact with, and the environment where they live.*

## Testimony before the Ways and Means Committee

In SUPPORT of

### House Bill 462- Higher Education - Tuition Waivers for Foster Care Recipients and Unaccompanied Homeless Youth - Alterations

Melissa Rock, Child Welfare Director, Advocates for Children and Youth  
February 21, 2017

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 462- Higher Education - Tuition Waivers for Foster Care Recipients and Unaccompanied Homeless Youth - Alterations. Advocates for Children and Youth (ACY) supports this bill.

Maryland has a tuition waiver (Education §15-106.1) for unaccompanied homeless youth and foster youth to attend Maryland's public colleges and universities. The tuition waiver is an essential tool for ensuring that Maryland's most vulnerable youth can successfully pursue a postsecondary education. According to national and multistate studies, while 84% of 17- and 18-year-old foster youth report wanting to go to college, only 20% of those who graduate from high school attend college and only 2-9% actually earn their bachelor's degree.<sup>1</sup> In the 2014-2015 academic year, there were 217 recipients of tuition waiver where were current or former foster youth.<sup>2</sup>

HB 462 is simply a technical bill to fix 2 small issues. First, during the 2016 Legislative Session, in an attempt to fix some of the glitches in the tuition waiver statute, the new language added to the bill **inadvertently excluded foster youth who are under 18**. While it doesn't happen often, some foster youth graduate high school or get their GED when they're 17 and without this legislation they will remain ineligible to utilize the tuition waiver until they turn 18.

Second, it is important to clarify that the **tuition waiver covers both credit and non-credit courses**. Every year in Maryland, after taking placement tests, nearly 60% of first-year community college students discover that they must take remedial courses in English or mathematics, which do not earn college credits.<sup>3</sup> Two four year colleges in Maryland have reported that over 90% of their first

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<sup>1</sup> Fostering Success in Education: National Factsheet on the Educational Outcomes of Children in Foster Care, located at [http://www.fostercareandeducation.org/OurWork/NationalWorkingGroup.aspx\\_at\\_p.1](http://www.fostercareandeducation.org/OurWork/NationalWorkingGroup.aspx_at_p.1).

<sup>2</sup> Maryland Department of Human Resources Social Services Administration, "Child Welfare Performance Indicators Report," December 2016 at p. 231. There is no data on the number of unaccompanied homeless youth who access the tuition waiver.

<sup>3</sup> The Status of College Readiness in Maryland, located at <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/Pubs/BudgetFiscal/2013-Policy-Briefing-College-Readiness.pdf>, at p. 2.

year students are requiring remedial course work.<sup>4</sup> Research has shown that even larger percentages of foster youth are required to take remedial courses in math and/or English compared with non-foster youth.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it's critical that remove this barrier that some foster youth have faced when enrolling in remedial classes.

**We urge this committee to issue a favorable report on HB 462 to ensure that foster and unaccompanied homeless youth receive the full intended benefit of our tuition waiver and are able to achieve their higher education goals.**

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<sup>4</sup> College and Career – Are Maryland Students Ready?, located at: <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/Pubs/BudgetFiscal/2016fy-budget-docs-operating-HEPB1-Higher-Education-Policy-Briefing---Remediation.pdf> at p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> "Charting the Course: Using Data to Support Foster Youth College Success" located at [http://www.cacollegepathways.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/charting\\_the\\_course\\_final.pdf](http://www.cacollegepathways.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/charting_the_course_final.pdf), at p.14.