

Unfavorable —Written Testimony**House Appropriations Committee*****HB 205 – Higher Education – Academic Forgiveness Policy – Established*****January 29, 2019**

On behalf of Maryland's independent colleges and universities and the 64,000 students they serve, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in opposition to **HB 205 – Higher Education – Academic Forgiveness Policy – Established**. This bill would require Maryland colleges and universities to establish a policy whereby an applicant's grades earned seven or more years ago at a prior higher education institution could be disregarded in the admission process. While MICUA supports the general intent of this bill to help college students overcome prior academic challenges and difficulties, we are very concerned this legislation would undermine an institution's ability to support a student's successful transition into the institution.

While specific approaches vary by campus, MICUA members already have processes and standards in place to evaluate and account for prior academic work in the transfer admission process. In reviewing a student's academic history, institutions consider not only the grades earned, but also the level and difficulty of all courses attempted and completed. Applicants are provided opportunities to submit a qualitative explanation for their academic records, including low or failing grades in specific courses, a low semester or cumulative GPA, or other "blips" appearing on their transcripts. Many institutions directly prompt transfer students to provide such explanations as part of their written essay for admission.

MICUA has specific concerns with mandating a standard seven-year academic forgiveness policy across all public and independent institutions in the State, including the following:

- Without a full understanding of a student's past coursework and challenges, an institution will not know what support mechanisms may be needed to help ensure that student's successful re-entry into college. Academic advisors and faculty advisors need to have a full picture of a student's past academic performance in specific courses or disciplines to assist them in providing proper guidance for future course or major selection. Ignoring this information does a disservice to both the student and the institution.

- This legislation could undermine an institution's ability to comply with eligibility and accountability standards for Title IV federal financial aid. Colleges and universities participating in Title IV must ensure that students have the "ability to benefit" from their education and are able to make "satisfactory academic process." There are federal aid policies that govern the circumstances under which repeated courses may be included when determining a student's enrollment status, which is a key factor in determining the level and amounts of certain forms of federal financial aid. Institutions are not in a position to accurately make these determinations without access to a student's complete academic history at the time of admission.

For these reasons, MICUA urges an unfavorable Committee report for HB 205.