

Oppose—Written Testimony**House Appropriations Committee*****HB 663 – Higher Education – Academic Forgiveness Policy – Established*****February 13, 2018**

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 663 – 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 admissions process.

While we support the general intent of this bill to help college students overcome prior academic challenges and difficulties, we are concerned that this legislation would undermine an institution's ability to support a student's successful transition into the institution. 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 need to know a student's past academic performance in specific courses or disciplines to assist them in providing proper guidance for future course selection.

Further, we have serious concerns that this legislation could undermine an institution's ability to comply with eligibility and accountability standards for Title IV federal financial aid. Colleges and universities that participate 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 also 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.

While specific policies vary by institution, MICUA member institutions have processes and standards in place to evaluate and account for prior academic work in the admissions process. In reviewing a student's prior academic history, institutions consider not only grades, but also the level and difficulty of courses completed. Through the transfer admissions process, applicants may provide a qualitative explanation for their prior academic records, including low or failing grades in certain courses or a low semester or cumulative GPA. Some institutions directly prompt students to provide such explanations as part of their written essay for transfer admission.

For all of these reasons, we urge an unfavorable Committee report for HB 663.