



Support

House Appropriations Committee
House Bill 231 (Barnes)
Higher Education – Guaranteed Access Grant Program - Applicability
Matt Power, President
mpower@micua.org
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On behalf of Maryland's independent colleges and universities and the more than 56,000 students we serve, thank you for the opportunity to provide a letter of support regarding [**HB 231 \(Barnes\) Higher Education – Guaranteed Access Grant Program - Applicability**](#), which delays the decentralization of the Guaranteed Access Grant Program until the 2029-2030 financial aid award year. This bill is a crucial step in ensuring the continued success of the Guaranteed Access Grant Program, a vital source of financial aid for Maryland's neediest students.

As the Committee may recall, the passage of HB 923 in the 2023 Session was a significant milestone for the Guaranteed Access Grant Program. The bill laid the groundwork for a decentralized program, preserving the Maryland Higher Education Commission's certifying role while allowing institutions of higher education to play a more active role in administering the grants. However, the bill also recognized the need for a phased implementation to ensure a smooth transition.

The Guaranteed Access Grant Program has been a cornerstone of Maryland's efforts to make higher education more accessible and affordable for low-income students. The Program provides critical funding to students who might otherwise be unable to pursue their academic goals. By providing a guaranteed source of funding, the Program helps to level the playing field and promote economic mobility.

MICUA strongly supports the Guaranteed Access Grant Program and believes that it is essential to the State's efforts to promote college access and affordability. The Program has a proven track record of success, and its continuation is vital to ensure that Maryland's neediest students have access to the resources they need to succeed in an effective and timely manner.

As the State moves forward with the decentralization of the Guaranteed Access Grant Program, MICUA encourages MHEC to coordinate with the Financial Assistance Advisory Council and the Segmental Advisory Council to develop policies and procedures that will ensure the successful implementation of the Program. This collaboration will be critical in addressing any challenges that may arise during the transition and ensuring that the Program continues to serve the needs of Maryland's students.

We look forward to working with MHEC and other stakeholders to ensure that the Program is implemented in a way that benefits Maryland's neediest students. Thank you for considering our testimony.