



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 17, 2022

Contact: [Joe Francaviglia](#) - 443-622-0271

House of Delegates Passes Largest New State Investment in Higher Education Financial Aid in Maryland in a Generation

Delegate Lierman, "This is a significant investment in Maryland students ensuring cost is not a barrier to higher education"

Annapolis, MD — Today, [HB 734](#) passed the House of Delegates which would establish the largest new state investment in higher education grants and expand eligibility criteria. In a time of rising costs and college costs becoming unattainable to many, this is an important investment to ensure cost is not a barrier to Maryland students having the opportunity to reach their full potential. The lead sponsors of the legislation in the House are Del. Brooke Lierman (District 46) and Del. Jared Solomon (District 18).

"We are expanding eligibility and increasing the total amount of financial aid available," **said Delegate Brooke Lierman, one of the lead sponsors of this legislation.** "And for the first time - we are mandating that **\$4 million per year** be sent to scholarship funds for the children and dependents of public safety and military employees, including those that have lost their lives in the line of duty like Officer Keona Holley."

The specific scholarship funds are known as the Edward T Conroy and Jean B Cryor Scholarship Fund. These funds make scholarships available for eligible dependents of public safety and military employees, including those who are deceased. For instance, the children of the recently deceased Battalion Chief Joshua Laird - a firefighter in Frederick County - and the children of recently deceased Officer Keona Holley - a Baltimore Police Officer - can benefit from this program.

"This legislation makes college and higher education more affordable for thousands of Marylanders," **said Jared Solomon, a lead sponsor of the legislation.** "This bill sends a clear message to our students, access to college should be based on your hard work and ability, not your ability to pay."

This bill will improve access to higher education for students in Maryland by:

- Requires an appropriation of at least \$112,000,000 in the Governor's annual budget bill for the Howard P Rawlings Education Excellence Awards beginning in fiscal year 2024 and each year thereafter.

- Ensures students remain eligible for their full financial aid award amount even if their family income changes, as long as they are still eligible for a federal Pell Grant.
- Provides \$4,000,000 in fiscal year 2024 and each year thereafter to the Edward T Conroy and Jean B Cryor Scholarship Fund, which awards scholarship to military and public safety personnel and their eligible dependents.
- Provides \$400,000 in the annual budget bill for the James Proctor Scholarship Program.

“Passage of this bill will ensure that students won’t jeopardize their education due the cost of a degree or a change in financial aid,” **said Committee Chair Paul Pinsky, Senate sponsor.** “I look forward to moving this important bill in the senate.”

“The Maryland Alliance supports HB734 because it is a Win-Win for the Maryland because more needy students will receive the Howard P Rawling Education Assistance making it affordable for them to attend college. HB734 also demonstrates Maryland’s commitment to students of poverty by removing a financial barrier for them to attend college and graduate. This is an exciting opportunity for students seeking an affordable education,” said **Joseph Fisher, CEO First Generation College Bound & Chair of Maryland Alliance for College Affordability and Equity.**

“This bill is a win for our state’s high-achieving, college-bound students with limited financial resources — and a win for all of Maryland,” **said Cassie Motz, Executive Director, CollegeBound Foundation, and Vice Chair of Maryland Alliance for College Affordability and Equity.** “A college degree can be the ticket to financial independence, which in turn increases the state’s tax base. A college graduate earns \$1 million more over the course of a lifetime than a student with only a high school degree. Thank you to the House of Delegates, led by Delegates Brooke Lierman and Jared Solomon, for this historic investment in Maryland’s students. I urge the Senate to pass this bill and urge the Governor to sign it into law.”

The bill now heads to the senate for final passage. You can find the bill language [here](#) and a bill summary [here](#).

###

Brooke Lierman was elected to represent Maryland’s 46th Legislative District in the House of Delegates in 2014. After spending five years as a member of the Appropriations Committee in the House, she assumed a leadership role on the Environment and Transportation Committee in 2019. Additionally, she is the House Chair for the Joint Committee on Pensions, sits on the Joint Committee on Ending Homelessness, and founded the Maryland Transit Caucus. Brooke has successfully passed landmark legislation to invest in and improve public transit; end suspension and expulsion of young students; fund evidence-based gun violence prevention programs; aid sex trafficking victims; close loopholes in our family and paid leave laws and much more. In 2019, working with environmental groups and small businesses around the state, she passed the nation’s first statewide ban on Styrofoam food and beverage containers and in 2020 she passed the HOME Act, banning housing discrimination based on the renter’s source of income.

When not in Annapolis, Brooke is a disability and civil rights attorney. She and her husband Eben Hansel live in Baltimore with their nine-year-old son, Teddy, and three-year-old daughter, Eliza.