

**Testimony for the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee**

**February 21, 2018**

**SB 546 Higher Education – Tuition Rates – Exemptions**

**FAVORABLE**

The ACLU of Maryland supports SB 546, which would allow more individuals to qualify for in-state tuition under the Maryland Dream Act that was passed by referendum in 2012.

The Maryland Dream Act has empowered young inspirational individuals to pursue their dream and enter the Maryland workforce prepared for whatever they may face. Ms. Pratishtha Khanna was one such individual. She is a third generation Dreamer, a DACA recipient who inherited from her grandmother the drive to become a physician. Her grandmother and father faced socioeconomic barriers that prevented them from attending medical school, but passed that dream to Pratishtha. Pratishtha was part of the first group to qualify for in-state tuition under the newly passed Maryland Dream Act, after having graduated from Howard Community College. She enrolled at the University of Maryland Baltimore County (“UMBC”), and went on to work at Johns Hopkins University Hospital as a clinical technician in the intensive care unit, and part-time as a medical scribe for the emergency department. She is currently studying for the Medical College Admission Test (“MCAT”) so she can become a doctor. The Maryland Dream Act empowered Pratishtha to pursue her dream and her family’s dream, and is the epitome of why SB 546 is so crucial to Maryland. We need more Pratishthas in Maryland, to be our doctors, entrepreneurs, and community leaders.

SB 546 will also protect DACA recipients whose legal status is in limbo since the program’s rescission on September 5, 2017. Although there are currently two preliminary injunctions that are preventing the program’s complete termination, without a permanent solution in the U.S. Congress, current DACA recipients in postsecondary education in Maryland risk losing the funding they need to stay in school. SB 546 will ensure that even if protections for DACA recipients is not granted in Congress, they will still be able continue their education and their lives as productive Maryland residents.

My name is Pratishtha, I was 10 years old when I migrated from India to the United States on April 25th, 2002, with a passport and a VISA. I have lived in Howard County for 14 years, 8 months, and 14 days - I have spent most of my life in this country.

"I am motivated to speak out in memory of my father, an upstanding, hard-working, law-abiding, first generation immigrant laborer in the United States, who suffered because his rights as a worker were violated," said Pratishtha Khanna who came to the U.S. when she was 10 years old under a valid tourist visa, spent many years undocumented, and now is authorized under the Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals program and is studying to be a doctor

2 years howard community college nov 6 2012 and then dream passed. Enrolled at UMBC fall of 2012 and was able to take advantage.

I am continuing to work on my goals because as of now, my life as I know it is only guaranteed till November 2019 (when my DACA approval expires). I will register to take the MCAT in January 2018 and continue to apply to medical school. I am also working full time so that I can prepare for the rainy days ahead.

For the foregoing reasons, the ACLU of Maryland urges a favorable report on SB 546.