

House Approves Bill Allowing Maryland Residents to Qualify for In-State Tuition Regardless of Citizenship Status

By Brooke Heath



Last week, the Maryland House of Representatives voted 81 to 57 in favor of a bill that would allow some illegal immigrants to qualify for in-state tuition.

The bill would help to make college more affordable for children of illegal immigrants by allowing residents of Maryland to qualify for in-state residency regardless of their citizenship status.

Currently, the state is required to provide education for children of immigrants through high school. In order to qualify for in-state tuition, nonresident students must apply for college within five years of graduating from a Maryland high school.

“They’re young, hardworking people,” said House Democratic Leader Kumar Barve.

In a heated debate, those in the House who opposed the proposal argued that if it were allowed to pass, it would benefit those who are breaking the law.

“It is an issue of citizenship and the rule of law,” said Republican Delegate Pat McDonough.

Those who opposed the bill argued that it would be a costly choice to make. A state analysis projected that the change could cost Maryland about \$1.1 million per year by 2012.

However, despite opposition—and some veiled personal attacks—the House approved the bill. It will now go to the Senate.

This is not the first time Maryland lawmakers have approved such a bill. In 2003, a similar bill was passed, only to be vetoed by former Republican governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr.

It seems that may not be the result this time around. According to the Associated Press, current Maryland governor Martin O’Malley said that he would, indeed, sign a bill allowing some illegal immigrants to qualify for in-state tuition. Governor O’Malley, a Democrat, referred to education as “the light that allows individuals to create greater opportunity for all of us.”

If this bill is enacted, Maryland would be in the company of states such as California, Illinois, and New York which have already extended in-state tuition to residents regardless of their citizenship status.