



AccessLex Institute is pleased to offer its support for HB 1268, a bill to establish the Legal Education Success Collaborative, sponsored by Delegate Shaneka Henson (District 30A).

AccessLex Institute is a non-profit organization which fosters broad-based access to quality legal education for talented, purpose-driven students and works to maximize the value and affordability of a law degree through policy advocacy, research and student-focused initiatives.

The legal profession is the least diverse profession in the country. According to the 2010 Census, 13 percent of the U.S. population is Black, but only 10 percent of first-year law students are Black. This could be because 51 percent of Black law school applicants in 2017-18 were not admitted to any law schools, compared to just 19 percent of white students who applied and were not admitted anywhere. This has consequences for the legal profession: National Association of Law Placement data shows that less than two percent of law firm partners are Black. We believe that graduating law school classes must reflect the diversity of the nation so that those graduates can go on to represent clients in their communities and increase access to justice for those that need it.

Diversifying the pipeline between undergraduate institutions and law schools is one critical means through which to achieve this goal. Oftentimes, students of color are being shut out of law school because they do not have the informational and financial support they need during college and the admissions process. For example, students of color tend to apply later in the admissions cycle, when there are fewer seats and scholarships available. Black students are also scoring, on average, 10 percentage points lower on the Law School Admission Test than their white peers, making it harder for them to gain admission to law school. These trends are driven largely by less access to funds to cover the costs of LSAT preparation and applying to law school and less access to important information about navigating the admissions process.

The creation of the Legal Education Success Collaborative, which would prepare students from Maryland Historically Black Colleges and Universities for law school and provide them with academic support and assistance while in law school and throughout their legal careers, would help more underrepresented students and students of color access law school in Maryland.

At AccessLex, we are committed to increasing the knowledge base of effective methods for increasing the enrollment and success of law students from historically underrepresented racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. That is why we created our own national legal education pipeline program, LexScholars, which supports prospective law students from underrepresented backgrounds who possess potential for law school success but may be unlikely to gain admission due to lower standardized test scores. We also provide funding to

programs and initiatives aimed at helping college students or graduates from historically underrepresented groups successfully matriculate into law school and the legal profession through our Diversity Pipeline Intervention Grant Program.

Collectively, efforts such as ours, the Legal Education Success Collaborative that would be created by HB 1268, and others across Maryland and the country, will go a long way in supporting access to law school and the legal profession for aspiring students, many of whom may otherwise be unable to pursue those pathways.