



**Testimony on House Bill 2457 A**  
Senate Education Committee  
April 25, 2017

Chair Roblan, Vice-Chair Linthicum, and members of the Committee. My name is Kyle Thomas and I am the Director of Legislative and Policy Affairs for the Higher Education Coordinating Commission. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on House Bill 2457 A and the authority for the HECC to receive and address student complaints.

Federal law requires that, for public and private institutions to receive student aid funding under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, states must have a process in place to independently review complaints concerning the institution.

The Commission has been working with Alliance of Independent Colleges and Universities on language that meets the letter and spirit of the federal requirements and we believe that the language presented in the bill fairly represents those discussions.

Additionally, this bill allows HECC to maintain confidentiality during the investigatory phase of the student complaint process. Other state agencies have authority to conduct investigations without disclosing materials related to those investigations. Because student complaints can be sensitive in nature, and because the fact a student has complained does not mean an institution has committed any sort of wrongdoing, we believe it is prudent to allow complaints to be processed without the risk of disclosure. This does not obviate the need for HECC to disclose if it has taken any action against an institution due to a complaint, and we believe the lack of this provision in the higher education statutes is one of a list of oversights related to the creation of the HECC office that we are working to correct.

Thank you again for the opportunity to discuss this legislation. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.