



Maryland Higher Education Commission
 Office of Student Financial Aid
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SPECIAL FINANCIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Appeal Criteria / Required Documentation 2026-2027 Academic Year

The Maryland Higher Education Commission understands that students may experience circumstances that result in them failing to meet certain requirements for consideration or reinstatement of State grant and scholarship programs. Therefore, the Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA) has developed an appeal process for certain allowable programs and circumstances that allows students to request (re)consideration of a State award

Appeal Process

1. Students determine if they meet the criteria to submit an appeal based off the program and allowable appeals under that program.
2. Student gathers all required documentation for the appeal.
3. Student completes the [2026-27 MHEC Grant and Scholarship Appeal Request Form](#), uploading all required documentation, by the published deadline.
4. OSFA staff will review the appeal and make a determination within 45 business days, unless the student is informed otherwise.

Important Reminders

- Appeals must be submitted through the Appeal Request Form and will not be accepted by any other means.
- It is the student’s responsibility to ensure they have provided all required documentation for their appeal. Incomplete appeal requests will be denied.
- It is the student’s responsibility to submit their appeal by the published deadline. Late appeals requests will be denied.

2026-2027 Special Financial Circumstances Appeal Information	
Eligible Programs	Guaranteed Access Grant Educational Assistance Grant 2+2 Transfer Scholarship
Appeal Opens	February 11, 2026
Appeal Closes	July 1, 2026
Allowable Reasons for Appeal	Required Documentation
Death of parent or student’s spouse on or after <u>January 1, 2026</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter explaining student’s circumstances including financial impact • Copy of the death certificate of parent or student’s spouse • 2024 IRS Tax Return Transcript or Signed 1040 Form of a) student and b) parent(s) or c) student’s spouse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If student/parent/student’s spouse did not file taxes in 2024, provide W-2s/1099s or other documentation to prove income</i> • Estimated 2026 total income and pay stubs or other documentation showing income earned between January 1, 2026 and date of appeal submission for student and/or surviving parent
Separation or divorce (of parent or student) on or after <u>January 1, 2026</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy of the separation agreement or divorce decree of parents or of student from spouse • 2024 IRS Tax Return Transcript or Signed 1040 Form of a) student and b) parent(s) or c) student’s spouse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If student/parent/student’s spouse did not file taxes in 2024, provide W-2s/1099s or other documentation to prove income</i> • Estimated 2026 total income and pay stubs or other documentation showing income earned between January 1, 2026 and date of appeal submission for student and/or custodial parent
Allowable Reasons for Appeal (cont.)	Required Documentation (cont.)

<p>Complete involuntary unemployment that began on or after <u>January 1, 2025</u>, for at least 10 consecutive weeks of the student, the student's parent (if dependent) or student's spouse (if independent and married)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter explaining student's circumstances for appeal including financial impact and timeline • Written notice of involuntary job termination or layoff from former employer (loss of income from temporary positions, self-employment, or commissions may not be considered) • 2024 IRS Tax Return Transcript or Signed 1040 Form of a) student and, if applicable, b) parent(s) or c) student's spouse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If student/parent/student's spouse did not file taxes in 2024, provide W-2s/1099s or other documentation to prove income • Copy of last pay stub from previous employer • If applicable, copies of severance pay and/or any benefits that continued after dismissal • Copy of unemployment benefits or proof of denial of benefits <p><u>If involuntary unemployment began in 2025</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2025 IRS Tax Return Transcript or Signed 1040 Form a) student and b) parent(s) or c) student's spouse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If student/parent/student's spouse did not file or has not yet filed 2025 taxes, provide W-2s/1099s or other documentation to prove 2024 total income</i> • Estimated 2026 total income and pay stubs or other documentation showing income earned between January 1, 2026 and date of appeal submission <p><u>If involuntary unemployment began in 2026</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimated 2026 total income and most recent pay stubs from current employer, if applicable
<p>Loss of child support or social security benefits as result of student reaching the age of majority on or after <u>January 1, 2026</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter explaining student's circumstances for appeal including financial impact • Documentation of the loss of child support (i.e. court order or divorce decree) or loss of social security benefits • 2024 IRS Tax Return Transcript or Signed 1040 Form of a) student and, if applicable, b) parent(s) or c) student's spouse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If student/parent/student's spouse did not file taxes in 2024, provide W-2s/1099s or other documentation to prove income</i> • Estimated 2026 total income and pay stubs or other documentation showing income earned between January 1, 2026 and date of appeal submission for student and/or custodial parent

IMPORTANT: Students who have previously received the Educational Assistance Grant (EA) cannot be considered for the Guaranteed Access Grant, regardless of any changes to their circumstances. If a student has previously received GA, but later received CBEAG, they also cannot be considered for the Guaranteed Access Grant, regardless of any changes in their circumstances. **Appeals for GA consideration from students who have previously received EA or CBEAG will be denied.**

Additionally, **there cannot be a gap in eligibility for GA awards.** If a student has lost eligibility for the GA in 2025-2026 or earlier, they cannot appeal for reconsideration for the GA in 2026-2027.