



Oppose

House Appropriations Committee

House Bill 385 (Frederick County – Higher Education – Joseph A. Sellinger Program)

Timothy Trainor, President

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding House Bill 385 (Frederick County – Higher Education – Joseph A. Sellinger Program) – which I respectfully oppose. I would also like to thank the sponsor for meeting with me in advance of this hearing to listen to my concerns.

The Mount is more than an institution of higher education; we are an integral part of the community, contributing to the quality of life of students and community members throughout Frederick County. As the second largest employer in northern Frederick County, Mount St. Mary's University has a major impact on the economy in our part of Maryland. Many of our priority projects seek to improve the economy and wellbeing of our local community and the state. As a university we are growing and building new facilities, and renovating and expanding our current facilities employing local firms. We are working on improving access to and the quality of health care in the northern part of Frederick County as we revamp health care at the university. We do outreach programs that seek to improve high school completion rates and are investing in educating and graduating more students to serve in high-demand fields in Maryland, such as teaching and cybersecurity. In order to continue funding these initiatives adequately, we need Sellinger funds to support financial aid and critical support services for deserving students.

I would like to commend you for your past and continued support of the Sellinger Program. As the president of a small liberal arts college, I can tell you first-hand what a difference these funds make for the students on my campus. Most students rely on financial aid to afford postsecondary education and last year, the Mount funded \$19M in institutional aid to Maryland residents. In addition to this, 72% of the Sellinger funds we received went to providing financial aid for students from Maryland.

Annually we use about 11% of Sellinger funds to support career services and 17% for learning services. These critical services on campus enable students to achieve great outcomes. 97% of our graduates from the Class of 2018 were employed full-time or in graduate school one year after graduation compared with the mid-Atlantic region benchmark from 90 other higher education institutions of 77% (NACE Annual Report 2018). Our Career Center also arranges internships and 69% of our Class of 2019 graduates did at least one internship helping prepare students for the workforce. The small amount of Sellinger funds used to support career services truly helps students quickly enter the workforce and achieve the high employment outcomes I mentioned. Our Learning Services Center, supported in part by Sellinger funds, provides purposeful, student-centered, in-person and online academic skills information and programming that is open and accessible, and

welcoming to students. 75% of at-risk students who participate in these programs will attain a GPA of 2.0 or higher after their first year and then persist to graduation on par with all other students.

Most significantly, Sellinger funds enable the Mount to provide financial aid to students from all across Maryland so they have the opportunity for, access to, and choice of a private, nonprofit institution of higher education. One student who is from Montgomery County, is a junior at the Mount majoring in cyber security. In each of her first two years, she received more than \$18,000 from the Maryland Guaranteed Access Grant. However, because her parents' income rose slightly above the threshold for the GA grant prior to this year, she lost over \$15,000 in state aid when her \$18,600 grant was replaced with a \$3,000 Educational Assistance Grant. Her parents' income only exceeded the threshold by a few thousand dollars, and she remained eligible for the federal Pell Grant, but there was still a \$15,000 loss in financial aid that the family had to overcome. Thanks to the Sellinger Funds, we were able to help her fill some of the gap and remain at the Mount. A second student is from Baltimore County and has overcome several horrific obstacles in his life, including his mother being murdered when he was 4 years old and his father being paralyzed, leaving him as his father's most important care-giver at the age of 12. The other half of the story is that his dream was to be a professional basketball player. His high school coaches tried to find a Division I program to recruit him, but had no luck. We hired a new basketball coach in the summer of 2018 and by the time his coach reached out to our new coach, it was after all of the financial aid deadlines so he missed out on the Guaranteed Access Grant and many other funds. Our financial aid office did its best to put together a financial aid package, including the Maryland Campus Based EA Grant, Pell, SEOG and Mount money. If it were not for the support of the Sellinger Grant, we would not have been able to give him the amount of aid he needed to attend the Mount. I am happy to report that as a sophomore he is now: 1) on a full athletic scholarship; 2) our starting point guard; 3) the team's leading scorer; and 4) a Dean's List student as a business major who also wants to get into cybersecurity. Without the Sellinger funds, he would not be at the Mount.

I appreciate the intent of HB 385 to focus on supporting the financial aid needs of students who graduate from high schools in Frederick County by prioritizing our distribution of Sellinger aid funding to them. However, as a state-funded program, we use the Sellinger funds to benefit students from all across Maryland and I believe this proposed legislation will limit our ability to fund those Maryland students who most need financial aid. In Frederick County, just over 1,700 residents attended Hood College and Mount St. Mary's University last year, and almost 1,000 residents of Frederick County attended a MICUA institution *outside* of the county. Likewise, last year almost 1,500 Maryland students, including the two I mentioned, above, who reside outside of Frederick County attended Mount St. Mary's University and Hood College. The provisions of House Bill 385, while well-intentioned, would likely make it more difficult for students like these students and many others to attend the institution of their choice in Maryland. The proposed bill would also prevent us from using Sellinger funds for critical student career and learning services, which enable students to achieve strong outcomes at the Mount and upon graduation.

In closing, I'd like to thank you for your support and invite all of you to come visit Mount St. Mary's and experience the many ways we are improving our community and enhancing students' lives. Thank you again for all you do to support education in the great state of Maryland.