

Sample HBCU Faculty Testimony on HB1260

Chairwoman McIntosh and members of the Committee, I am Robert Johnson, Professor of mathematics and member of the faculty senate at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. My colleagues from Bowie University, Coppin University, and Morgan State University are here to provide testimony in support of HB1260: The Historically Black Colleges and Universities Funding legislation, and to endorse amendments proposed by the Coalition for Equity and Excellence in Higher Education.

HB1260 represents for us the boldest state effort to date to address lingering problems related to academic programming, faculty recruitment and retention, student enrollment and graduation rates, financial aid, accreditation and other issues unique to our HBCUs. Chief among the provisions is an allotment of \$577 million in special funding to be provided to the four HBCUs over a 10-year period beginning in 2022 and ending in 2031. The legislation also specifies a certain distribution per HBCU in year 2022 with the allocation in subsequent years being based on "the percentage share of students enrolled during the immediate preceding year at each institution compared to the total number of students enrolled at all of the historically Black Colleges and Universities."

Based on Carnegie classification and size (student enrollment) as criteria, we recommend a more equitable distribution among the HBCUs with no institution receiving less than \$10 million per annum for the 10-year period. In short, HB 1260 should tract the language in the senate version of the HBCU legislation previously introduced and later withdrawn by Senator Charles Sydnor.

HB1260 directs the University Global Campus to "work with the State's historically black colleges and universities... with the goal of developing and offering online academic programs." We have no doubt that UMGC could be a valuable asset; however, we agree with the Coalition that the legislation should make clear that said provision is not intended to restrict or restrain in any way, the choice of any HBCU campus to offer online programs through the use of campus-based or contracted technology platforms.

Finally, the proposed legislation encourages the hiring of a consultant to assist the HBCUs "as a collective" with programmatic development. The latitude to engage consultants in the HBCU enhancement process is critically important; however, the language of the bill should provide that each HBCU campus (as opposed to the HBCUs as a collective) should be free to engage consultants based on its unique needs and priorities.

Passage of HB1260, with the change noted, would do much to provide the resources necessary to ensure HBCUs are sufficiently competitive with other public institutions for students regardless of race and/or socioeconomic background. The funding included in the bill for the development of new and unique, high demand program as well as the funding for improving existing offerings would assist in eliminating program disparities with the Maryland higher education system and create greater opportunities for institutional cooperation and collaboration. Likewise, funding earmarked for financial aid, added faculty and faculty professional development would aid immeasurably in the matriculation and retention of students, faculty and support staff.

We, the HBCU faculty representatives, urge the Committee to pass HB 1260 with amendments to reflect the changes we have cited. In so doing, Maryland would address many of the problems that have plagued the HBCUs for decades and begin the task of making these four campuses as attractive as other state institutions for students regardless of race.

We wish to thank Speaker Jones and other sponsors of this legislation and other efforts to improve the plight of HBCUs and the students they serve.