



Morgan State University Testimony

in support of

Senate Bill 1/House Bill 1

Submitted by Dr. David Wilson, President of Morgan State University

Historically Black Colleges and Universities – Funding

Morgan State University supports the passage of Senate Bill 1/House Bill 1 requiring, among a number of other provisions, that the Governor of the State of Maryland, in certain fiscal years, include in the annual State operating budget certain funds for certain historically black colleges and universities in the State; establishing the Historically Black Colleges and Universities Reserve Fund as a special, non-lapsing fund; and requiring the Maryland Higher Education Commission (Commission) to administer the Fund.

In this testimony, I wish to highlight the salient points, which would bring to an end the 16 yearlong lawsuit in the state of Maryland. Morgan State University is an institution on the rise with a great deal of momentum. Our student population has increased by eight percent since 2009, to nearly 8,000 students. In 2016, the Maryland State Legislature designated Morgan as its “preeminent public urban research university.” In that same year, the National Trust for Historic Preservation listed Morgan as a national treasure, the only campus in higher education in the United States to be so named. Finally, in 2018, the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education elevated Morgan’s research mission from R3 (moderate research) to R2 (high research activity). With this elevation of Morgan’s research mission, only one public university in Maryland, the University of Maryland College Park, has a higher research classification.

Should a settlement materialize, Morgan will use those investments to further position the University toward achieving R1 status -- focusing on the intractable challenges facing urban areas like Baltimore City. This would position us as the lone public research university in the state with this mission. We will put in place unique high demand programs that are in alignment with the work of the future, and provide much needed financial support to our students. We will also enhance Morgan’s branding and marketing efforts so that students all over this state, regardless of race or ethnicity, would come to understand the jewel the state has in Morgan State University.

Historical Context for Morgan’s Support of Senate Bill 1/House Bill 1

The underfunding of Morgan State University, and the State’s other Historically Black Colleges, goes back eighty (80) years or more. As early as 1937, Baltimore native and federal judge, Morris A. Soper, headed a commission examining higher education in Maryland. Among the findings made by Judge Soper’s Commission was the observation that: “It is thus clear that the white population in Maryland has had the advantage of generous state support for its higher education many years in advance of the Negro population. The contrast between the amounts of money

received by the two racial groups would show, if possible of computation, an enormous differential in favor of the white race.”

Almost a decade later, in 1945, the Maryland Legislature created the Marbury Commission to conduct a comprehensive review of higher education in Maryland. The Marbury Commission noted that none of the State’s four historically black institutions (HBIs) were equal in quality to the corresponding institution maintained for the white population and that while Maryland maintained extensive facilities for the graduate and professional education of white persons, there was no provision for the equivalent training of Blacks in the state.

In the 2000 Partnership Agreement between the State of Maryland and the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (OCR), the State promised, among other commitments, to provide funding to enhance Maryland’s historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Specifically, the State committed to provide: 1. enhanced operational funding to Bowie, Coppin, Morgan, and UMES consistent with the mix and degree level of their respective academic programs; 2. support for the development of the institutions’ research infrastructure; 3. support consistent with the academic profile of students; 4. lower student-faculty ratios appropriate to support their missions; and 5. funding to support students’ quality of campus life. But none of that happened.

A decade later, the Coalition for Equity and Excellence in Maryland Higher Education, Inc., (the “Coalition”) alleged that the State had failed to keep the promise(s) it made in the 2000 Partnership Agreement, and The Coalition accused MHEC of maintaining vestiges of the prior de jure system of segregation by allowing traditionally white schools to duplicate programs that were unique to the HBCUs. The Coalition then filed suit against the State in Coalition for Equity and Excellence in Maryland Higher Education, Inc., et al. v. Maryland Higher Education Commission, et al, Civ.No.06-2773-CCB (U.S. District, District of Maryland) to, in large measure, enforce the financial terms of the 2000 OCR Partnership Agreement.

In 2013, U.S. District Judge Catherine C. Blake made findings of fact and conclusions of law including that unnecessary program duplication is traceable to the de jure era, and she called for the appointment of special master to oversee the creation of a remedial plan to address past unequal treatment of Morgan, Bowie, Coppin and UMES by the State. Several attempts at mediation by the parties, including mediation ordered by the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth (4th) Circuit, have been unsuccessful.

Key Equity Provisions of Senate Bill 1/House Bill 1

Given this historical inequity outlined above, Morgan supports passage of Senate Bill 1/House Bill 1, including the bill’s following key provisions:

§10–214.

(5) THE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT SHALL BE PROVIDED IN THE FORM OF ADDITIONAL FUNDING IN THE AMOUNT OF \$577,000,000, WHICH SHALL BE PROVIDED IN AMOUNTS AS CALCULATED UNDER §15-126 OF THIS ARTICLE IN EACH OF FISCAL YEARS 2023 THROUGH 2032, AND SHALL BE ALLOCATED AMONG THE INSTITUTIONS; AND

(6) THE PROVISIONS OF §§ 15–126 AND 15–127 OF THIS ARTICLE SHALL ENSURE THAT MARYLAND’S HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES SHALL RECEIVE THIS SUPPORT.

§11–206.3.

Morgan also supports the Senate Bill 1/House Bill 1 provision requiring additional funds in an amount sufficient to employ the additional Maryland Higher Education Commission personnel needed to do the work of the Commission under this section.

In closing, Morgan strongly encourages support for Senate Bill 1/House Bill 1 and urges the General Assembly and the Commission to continue Maryland’s march towards equitable treatment of Bowie, Coppin, Morgan and UMES, by moving with dispatch to eliminate academic program duplication, and to provide the requisite supplemental funding to the State’s public 4–year HBCUs to remedy the findings of the US District Court of the State’s history of de facto and traceable de jure discrimination. Morgan also supports a continuation of this enhanced funding beyond 2031. Finally, Morgan unequivocally supports the Bill’s requirement that the additional enhancement funds should not supplant any in the University’s ongoing operating budget.

Morgan State University strongly encourages the passage of Senate Bill 1/House Bill 1.