



HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

House Bill 872

University System of Maryland - Student Withdrawal - Reimbursement of Tuition and Fees

March 8, 2022

Joann Boughman, Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs
Unfavorable

Chair McIntosh, Vice Chair Chang and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on House Bill 872. The bill requires the University System of Maryland (USM) and its constituent institutions and centers to authorize students to withdraw under extenuating circumstances of illness, injury, hospitalization and mental health and wellness, and to reimburse the student any tuition and fees paid by the student for the semester during which the student withdraws.

USM institutions work closely with students experiencing challenges with physical and mental health to help them complete their studies or return to campus after a hiatus. Each institution has specific policies and processes to support these students (attached).

While USM institutions work to support our students as is intended by this bill, we would be unable to support the bill as it is written. In particular, the bill does not (1) clearly define what conditions would meet the criteria of an extenuating circumstance or (2) establish a timetable for when a reimbursement would be realistic. This makes the fiscal implications difficult to estimate and could foreseeably result in many situations where a student could request a reimbursement after the majority of the coursework has been completed and costs were already incurred by the universities.

One commonality is that withdrawal policies begin with the first day of instruction and the failure to attend the university or attend classes does not change this policy. Institutions and students must consider the implications of withdrawal for the purposes of the return of federal financial *or Return of Title IV funds (R2T4)*. For the student, the percentage of funds returned decrease in the first three weeks of a semester. The funds schedule may vary campus-to-campus, but generally, students can expect a 90% refund in the 1st week; 50% in the second week; and 25% in the 3rd week. Regardless, students receiving Title IV federal financial aid must complete exit counseling as a condition of their loan agreement. That process begins here: <https://studentaid.gov/exit-counseling/> Beyond that timeframe, our focus is to work with students so that they may complete the course successfully.

As an example, at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, an existing Exception to Enrollment Policy receives approximately 200 applications. The school approved 33% of them. In many cases, the student was able to receive a W grade, which allowed them to withdraw from a course instead of failing. Further, for extenuating circumstances in which the student's verified last date of attendance/participation in the course was during the published refund period, in addition

to the retroactive enrollment adjustment (i.e. grade change from F to W), the student is refunded accordingly. This bill would be redundant to these existing policies.



About the University System of Maryland

The University System of Maryland (USM)—one system made up of 12 institutions, three regional centers, and a central office—awards 8 out of every 10 bachelor’s degrees in the State of Maryland. The USM is governed by a Board of Regents, comprised of 21 members from diverse professional and personal backgrounds. The chancellor, Dr. Jay Perman, oversees and manages the operations of USM. However, each constituent institution is run by its own president who has authority over that university. Each of USM’s 12 institutions has a distinct and unique approach to the mission of educating students and promoting the economic, intellectual, and cultural growth of its surrounding community. These institutions are located throughout the state, from western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, with the flagship campus in the Washington suburbs. The USM includes Historically Black Colleges and Universities, comprehensive institutions, research universities, and the country’s largest public online institution.