



## HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

### House Bill 477

### Public Senior Higher Education Institutions - Reproductive Health Services Plans - Requirements

February 14, 2023

### Favorable with Amendment

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts regarding House Bill 477. The bill requires University System of Maryland (USM) institutions to develop and implement comprehensive reproductive health services plans including referrals to off-campus health providers.

Reproductive health care is an issue that uniquely impacts college students. An unwanted or unplanned pregnancy can prevent people of both sexes from finishing school, leaving students with loan debt, no degree, and fewer pathways to career and salary advancement. Research shows many factors can prevent female college students from accessing reproductive health services, including fear of social stigmas or judgment, a lack of transportation, cost, or misinformation and distrust. The main factor preventing male college students from accessing reproductive health care, however, is a lack of knowledge about what services are available or how to access them.

The Supreme Court's Dobbs decision highlighted the importance of access to reproductive health care, including emergency contraceptives, birth control, and accurate information on preventing STDs and unwanted pregnancy for college students. It is very challenging for students to access Plan B, for example, or other forms of emergency contraception, as most college campus health centers are not stocked with it. Even the few on-campus health centers that do have emergency contraceptives have limited hours and are usually closed on weekends and holidays.

So what does a student in need of emergency contraception do to obtain it? They can try to travel off-campus to obtain it within the 24-hour time frame in which it is most effective. Unfortunately, as with many issues of accessibility, this argument overlooks and marginalizes students who might not have the financial resources to afford Plan B, don't have access to transportation to nearby pharmacies, or can't take time off from work or school to travel to these pharmacies.

The USM agrees with the intent of House Bill 477. The ability of students to access accurate information, and procure reproductive health services swiftly, is an important part of any plan. It is also important to recognize the challenge of building the capacity to recruit, train, and/or contract with community providers, as needed, to provide reproductive health services.

The USM looks forward to working with the sponsor to better focus the scope of the legislation where it can make the biggest impact. By concentrating this effort around **residential USM institutions with on-campus health facility centers**, officials can better track the readiness and efficacy of a reproductive health service plan. Additionally, updating a reproductive health

services plan annually is more work than necessary. The legislative interest and medical advancements in reproductive healthcare are ever changing and an annual reminder is unnecessary.

The main interest is to work collaboratively with the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) and student leaders to adopt protocols, share best practices, troubleshoot implementation issues, and review standards of care being received by providers.

Thank you for allowing us to share our thoughts regarding House Bill 477.

House Bill 477  
(First Reading File Bill)

Amendment No. 1

On page 1, in line 4, strike “each” and substitute “CERTAIN”, and in line 5, strike “institution” and substitute “INSTITUTIONS”.

Amendment No. 2

On page 1, in line 19, after “(A)” insert “(1)”; and after line 20, insert:

“(2) “PUBLIC SENIOR HIGHER EDUCATION DOES NOT INCLUDE THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES AND THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND GLOBAL CAMPUS.”; and

In line 21, after “(1)”, insert:

“(I) EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN SUBPARAGRAPH (i) OF THIS PARAGRAPH, “; and on page 2, after line 2 insert:

“(II) EXCEPT FOR PROVIDING ACCESS TO OVER-THE-COUNTER CONTRACEPTION THROUGH A RETAIL ESTABLISHMENT ON CAMPUS OR A VENDING MACHINE, THE PROVISIONS OF THIS SECTION DO NOT APPLY TO THE UNIVERSITY OF BALTIMORE.”



### **About the University System of Maryland**

The University System of Maryland (USM)—one system made up of twelve institutions, three regional centers, and a central office—awards eight out of every ten bachelor’s degrees in the State of Maryland. The USM is governed by a Board of Regents, comprised of twenty-one 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.

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