



HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

Senate Bill 864

Universities at Shady Grove Regional Higher Education Center – Designation as Community of Innovation

March 26, 2024

Favorable

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang and members of the committee, thank you for allowing the University System of Maryland (USM) the opportunity to offer testimony on Senate Bill 864. The bill designates the Universities at Shady Grove Regional Higher Education Center as the State's Regional Higher Education Community of Innovation. Last September, the USM Board of Regents passed a unanimous resolution to support this designation.

The USM is comprised of twelve distinguished institutions, and three regional centers – including the Universities at Shady Grove (USG). We award eight out of every ten bachelor's degrees in the State. Each of University 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 three Historically Black Institutions, comprehensive institutions and research universities, and the country's largest public online institution.

USG is the largest of the three USM Regional Higher Education Centers (RHECs) that serve students with limited 4-year degree opportunities, and target the workforce needs of the region and the state. USG has awarded more than 15,000 degrees in its 20 years and there is an opportunity to do more.

Due to the long-term impact of the pandemic, particularly for Community Colleges, RHECs in the USM have seen enrollment decline. Enrollment growth will rebound, but enrollment growth that is scalable and sustainable requires development of the next-generation RHEC that builds on the collaborative possibilities across academic institutions in the USM, embraces the changing demographics and experience of students coming into higher education, and more deeply aligns academic programs and pathways with workforce and industry priorities.

Many students in the state are not being reached – those without any post-secondary education credentials, as well as those employees in jobs that need that next set of credentials to grow in their careers and in there with their employers. With the implementation of *The Blueprint for Maryland's Future*, there will be more career and college ready high school graduates for whom pathways to high priority careers will be essential. In addition, there are approximately 4 million individuals in our state with some college and no credentials, and not accessing higher education at all. This is the gap in educational achievement and the state's high workforce demand and scarce talent is an opportunity for a next-generation RHEC to address.

The USM Chancellor and his leadership team at USM support the Designation of USG as a “Community of Innovation” and urge a Favorable Report on Senate Bill 864.



Contact: Susan Lawrence, Vice Chancellor for Government Relations, slawrence@usmd.edu