



HB341 Higher Education - Cost-of-Living Adjustment - Non-State-Supported Employees

Appropriations Committee:

Chair: Delegate Ben Barnes; Vice-Chair: Delegate Mark Chang

Testimony from:

Dr. William "Bill" Dennison

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Chair Barnes and members of the Appropriations Committee thank you for allowing me to provide this testimony in support of HB341 on behalf of the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (UMCES).

Since its founding in 1925, UMCES has been leading the way toward better management of Maryland's natural resources and the protection and restoration of the Chesapeake Bay. It's often referred to as "Maryland's university for the environment."

UMCES conducts the vast majority of its research through competitive grants and contract from federal, state, local, non-profit, and private sponsors. UMCES's total population includes 45% of individuals that are non-State supported positions and 28% of individuals who are partially State supported. Cost-of-Living (COLA) increases are important for staff retention and we support COLA. So much so, *UMCES treats all of its employees equally regarding COLA regardless of the level of State support.*

Since grants and contracts typically span two or more fiscal years, it is difficult to consider and calculate potential increases related to COLA. UMCES leadership advises faculty what possible potential COLA increases they should plan for in developing their research program budgets. All budgets are planning tools but it is generally NOT possible to go back to a sponsor requesting additional funds due to salary increases, including COLA. Therefore, it is common for other categories within a research budget to have to shift in order to cover these COLA increases in salary. Alternatively, UMCES may have their staff on payroll for a shorter period of time.

I would like to thank the sponsor, Delegate Solomon, for putting in a bill that helps to protect wages and jobs for non-State supported employees who are critical to meeting UMCES' important science and education based mission on the environment.

UMCES supports HB341 and seeks the Committee's favorable report.