



**Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Senate Bill 395
Higher Education – Credit Eligibility and Transfer of Credits – English as a
Second Language Courses
February 14, 2024
Favorable with Amendment**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on Senate Bill 395. The University System of Maryland (USM) supports this bill to allow college credit for Pell-eligible, non-developmental English language learning courses.

The USM is comprised of twelve distinguished institutions, and three regional higher education centers. We award eight out of every ten bachelor's degrees in the State. 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 three Historically Black Institutions, comprehensive and research universities, and the country's largest public online institution.

Maryland's population is diverse, and we are fortunate to benefit from the talents of immigrants from all parts of the world. People come to Maryland and want to improve their lives, including through their pursuit, and their children's pursuit, of higher education. For those of modest means, it would benefit them to have the courses they pay for, or that they use Pell grants to pay for, count toward their degree. This bill would ensure that happens. They can then shorten their time to degree based on the credits they earn in these courses.

The USM has been working to clarify that institutions have the ability under COMAR to determine which courses count for general education credit on their campuses. COMAR allows but does not require that modern language courses count for humanities credit or, more specifically, for humanities general education credit. We think it is important that this bill remains aligned with current COMAR regulations, and it is our understanding that amendments are forthcoming to underscore this alignment.

Credits that count for modern language credit at a community college will transfer to the USM as modern language credits.

Thank you for this opportunity to offer our perspective on this bill.



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