

February 10, 2025

Dear Members of the Maryland Senate Budget and Taxation Committee:

I am writing in support of **Senate Bill 603 University of Maryland, College Park Campus – TerpsEXCEED Program - Funding** sponsored by Senators Zucker, Feldman, Guzzone, Rosapepe, and Waldstreicher.

I live in Silver Spring, Maryland, and am the parent of an 18-year-old son with Down syndrome. I am also the Chief Impact Officer at the Rockville-based nonprofit Main Street Connect, which provides inclusive, affordable housing and community engagement to adults with and without disabilities. Based on my experiences as a parent and professional, I strongly support SB 603 to provide funding for UMD's TerpsEXCEED program, which offers inclusive post-secondary education to students with intellectual disabilities.

My typical daughter attends the University of Maryland and I strongly believe that my son with Down syndrome deserves the same opportunities as his sister, so I was thrilled when the TerpsEXCEED program was established. TerpsEXCEED students are given opportunities to grow academically and socially while gaining critical employment and independent living skills. The program also greatly benefits students without disabilities who learn from living and studying alongside diverse peers and have opportunities to develop professional skills through mentoring TerpsEXCEED students.

I urge you to support funding for TerpsEXCEED and to help the program become a model for other post-secondary educational institutions in Maryland. The future of our state relies on an educated and skilled workforce including Marylanders of all abilities.

Sincerely,

Julie Ryan-Silva
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