



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

Department of Counseling, Higher Education, and Special Education

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Dear Members of the Maryland House Appropriations Committee:

I am writing in support of House Bill 458

University of Maryland, College Park Campus – TerpsEXCEED Program sponsored by Delegates Wolek, Solomon, Forbes, Guyton, and Harris.

As your constituent living in Baltimore City, I am writing today to ask you to support college students with disabilities in Maryland and across the country. Inclusive higher education support academic growth, social development, independent living, and career advancement for a population of students who have historically not had that opportunity. I am advocating for the Governor to include in the annual budget bill, beginning in fiscal year 2027, the University of Maryland, College Park Campus TerpsEXCEED (EXperiencing College through Education and Employment Discovery) Program to provide educational and employment opportunities to students with intellectual disabilities.

With support from leaders at the College of Education at the University of Maryland, I had a privilege to work with the leaders and students in the TerpsEXCEED program to create a peer mentor training course that involves traditional college students at the university. Since its launch in 2019, we have garnered great interest amongst traditional college students as this course not only impacted students in the TerpsEXCEED program but also traditional college students who worked with them. I can testify that the TerpsEXCEED program has provided tremendously meaningful experiential learning opportunities for both the TerpsEXCEED students and traditional college students. Just from having conversations from my traditional college students whom I taught, I know that many have found a passion in teaching, rehabilitation, and policy advocacy from the course experience. TerpsEXCEED program has a reach beyond just including historically marginalized students, but preparing traditional college students to become more inclusively minded and civically engaged.

As a clinical associate professor in the special education program, I see first-hand how inclusive higher education programs support students to postsecondary career outcomes. TerpsEXCEED, University of Maryland's Inclusive Higher Education Program, offers students valuable learning opportunities, meaningful social engagements, and safe and inclusive environments. TerpsEXCEED also provides students with developing internships and job opportunities on and off campus, gathering supervision feedback, and providing direct employment support. This includes goal setting and career planning for each student in the program, leading to outcomes of

employment and financial success to continue after the student graduates. It also trains hundreds of peer mentors in kind problem-solving, relationship building and teamwork development, all skills that lead to outstanding future members of Maryland's workforce.

I urge you to work with your congressional colleagues on the Committee to provide institutional support for TerpsEXCEED, that also will support expansion of this programming across Maryland.

The future of our state and nation relies on an educated, skilled, and caring workforce. I am relying on you to do what is right for Maryland.

Respectfully Submitted,



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