



HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

House Bill 1151

Higher Education - Undergraduate Degree Requirement - United States History Course

March 5, 2020

Unfavorable Report

Chair McIntosh, Vice Chair Jackson and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts regarding House Bill 1151. The bill mandates that each public institution of higher education require an undergraduate student to pass a United States history course to earn a degree. All college graduates should not only have a working knowledge of history, but they should be well-prepared to be responsible and civically engaged citizens. However, a single required history course will not accomplish this goal.

In Maryland, a US History course is a requirement for high school graduation. Approximately 80% of students in the University System of Maryland (USM) institutions would have already had such a course. Many out-of-state students would have had a US History course as well. USM institutions provide students several options in civic and community engagement, participation in advocacy processes, and voter registration and education efforts. The institutions that comprise the USM are national leaders in civics education and civic engagement

That initiative includes faculty development opportunities for faculty across all subjects to help them bring civic and community engagement into their classroom. Three USM institutions have achieved the prestigious Carnegie Community Engagement Classification. Fewer than 10% of all universities and colleges in the country have earned this honor. Towson University, University of Maryland, Baltimore County and Salisbury University have all earned the classification. Other USM institutions, including the University of Maryland, College Park have wide-ranging and substantive opportunities for students to participate civic engagement activity.

According to the National Study on Learning, Voting and Engagement (NSLVE) at Yale University, the USM has among the highest rates of student voter registration and voting in the country. 81% of USM students were registered for the 2018 election, and over 44% voted, which is 5% higher than all other public four-year universities.

In addition, USM institutions would incur additional costs. These would include costs to hire additional faculty, advisors and infrastructure to assure that every student take (and pass) a US History course. All curricula for every major, general education requirement, and transfer pathways would have to be adjusted [and all catalogues revised] to reflect this new requirement. High school, community college, and university advisors would have to be appropriately trained to assure that each student could take a specific course in a sequence that would not disrupt their schedules.

For these reasons, the USM respectfully urges an unfavorable report on House Bill 1151.