



HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

House Bill 1052

University System of Maryland - Contaminants in Campus Buildings - Review, Monitoring, and Remediation

March 10, 2020

Support with Amendments

Chair McIntosh, Vice Chair Jackson, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on House Bill 1052. This bill requires the University System of Maryland (USM) to establish an ongoing monitoring program for each campus building in which a contaminant, including those specified, is identified. The USM must develop a transparent and inclusive system-wide process for students, faculty, and staff to submit, in writing, specific concerns related to building contamination. In addition, the USM must conduct a comprehensive environmental review, as specified, of each campus building within the USM. Based on the environmental review, the USM must prepare an environmental report with specified information, which must be submitted to the Governor and General Assembly by December 1, 2020.

We fully support the intent of this bill and we are dedicated to the same critical goals of protecting the health and safety of our students, faculty and staff; as well as preserving the physical integrity of our facilities. As we will outline for you today, however, we are confident that our ongoing actions to address the indoor environment of our campus buildings—particularly as they have been strengthened and enhanced by our Board of Regents, and by each campus president in the last few years—are wholly sufficient to achieve the goals prescribed by this bill.

We are concerned that the significant increased costs attributed to fulfilling the mandates of this bill would create a difficult fiscal burden and could be better used to address the remediation of facilities. The fiscal note for HB1052 is, we believe, very conservatively approximately \$6 million per year. We believe that any money dedicated to this issue area would be better used to allow the campuses to continue their efforts to fix and remediate our aging infrastructure. While we understand and appreciate the impetus for this legislation we would like to avoid a prohibitively expensive unfunded mandate.

Last November, a USM press release outlined the findings from a group of independent experts (with deep experience in infectious diseases, public health and communication, facilities management, industrial hygiene, and mechanical systems) that were tasked by the USM Board of Regents with reviewing the issue of environmental health in buildings at the University of

Maryland, College Park (UMCP). The expert panel relayed a finding that, in addressing these issues, campus officials followed all recognized federal, state and campus protocols in their efforts to inform the campus and maintain a healthy campus environment. Even more important to our discussion today, they made several recommendations that are helping to inform best practices at all USM institutions, including:

- Establish a broader culture of emergency management and training
- Develop better, more coordinated systems for tracking data, both on and off campus
- Improve campus-wide systems for communicating with faculty, staff, students, families and other outside stakeholders on health and wellness issues.

Ultimately, the USM Board of Regents committed to continue to monitor issues related to student health and work with USM presidents to see that resources continue to be available to address them.

Given the ongoing actions and focus by the USM and each of our campuses on these issues, we request this bill be amended into a requirement that the USM report to the Governor and General Assembly on our efforts in addressing these environmental hazards and plans to continue to monitor and address them in the future.