



**SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE**

**Senate Bill 1043**

**Historically Black Colleges and Universities – Funding**

**March 11, 2020**

**Favorable**

**Aminta H. Breaux, Ph.D., President**

Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, committee members, thank you for the opportunity to comment on Senate Bill 1043. As the President of Bowie State University -- Maryland's oldest historically black university -- I support Senate Bill 1043, which would resolve longstanding litigation over the issues of program duplication and *de jure* segregation in Maryland's public higher education system. I applaud Senator Sydnor and members of the legislature for taking this bold step forward in support of our Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

Our Strategic Plan, entitled *Racing to Excellence*, is grounded in three main priorities: achieving academic excellence; promoting student success; and ensuring the long-term viability of Bowie State University. The university has been working hard to move this shared agenda and we have seen significant progress. At a time when institutions across the country - especially HBCUs - are seeing declining enrollment or worst - having to close their doors – Bowie State University is growing. Applications are up by four percent, and we have already admitted 52% more students for fall 2020 over last fall. Our fall 2019 enrollment was 6,171 with students who hail from 33 states and 29 foreign countries.

Bowie State currently offers 23 undergraduate majors, 19 master's degrees, 2 doctoral degrees and 14 post-baccalaureate certificates. We continue to exceed MHEC's projections for degree production, and we are doing our part to produce workforce-ready graduates. More students are pursuing degrees in high-demand STEM fields at Bowie State than ever before.

Building on our strengths in cyber security, computing and technology; business and professional studies; as well as education, our faculty are working to enhance existing programs and develop new, innovative programs to meet Maryland's workforce needs. Therefore, we are

in need of the necessary funding to develop and market these programs, recruit and retain outstanding faculty, and offer competitiveness scholarship/financial aid packages to attract and retain a diverse population of students.

Senate Bill 1043 would provide the funding we need in areas that are critical to Bowie State University's continued growth and competitiveness: new/expanded academic programs; scholarships/financial aid; academic support; faculty development; and marketing. This funding is important to our long-term viability and the economic prosperity of the region. The funds will also help Bowie State University diversify our enrollment by making us a campus of choice for more students seeking an affordable, high-quality education. Diversity is important to the educational experience for all of our students. Indeed, one of the five goals in our Strategic Plan is to enhance our campus culture of diversity and inclusion. Inclusivity is also one of our core values.

As one of the nation's top HBCUs according to *U.S. News & World Report*, and one of the fastest growing institutions in the state of Maryland, Bowie State University is poised for even greater contributions to the state. Now is the time to invest in our thriving institution. The investment contemplated in Senate Bill 1043 would position Bowie State to fulfill its mission as a public institution for generations to come and to serve the public good.

On behalf of Bowie State University, our students, faculty, staff and alumni, I thank the members of the General Assembly for their support and I urge a favorable report for SB 1043.