

TESTIMONY OF SENATOR CORY MCCRAY
SB 435
EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
SENATE OF MARYLAND
SUPPORT
Feb. 12, 2020

Good afternoon, Chairman Pinsky and members of the committee. I have introduced Senate Bill 435 - Legal Education Success Collaborative – first, to provide support for students from Maryland’s historically black colleges and universities who aspire to become lawyers, and second, to help however possible to diversify the legal profession. This bill will appropriate funds to expand two outstanding programs offered at Maryland’s two law schools, which are designed to meet these two goals.

I am joined today by Dean Ronald Weich from the University of Baltimore School of Law and Dean Donald Tobin from the University of Maryland School of Law. The deans will speak in greater detail about their programs, but let me just say that – despite the ever-popular statement, “Who needs more lawyers?”, we really do need more lawyers. We need more lawyers of color.

According to the 2018 Report on Diversity in U.S. Law Firms, the most recent report on this subject by the National Association for Law Placement published in January 2019, the representation of African Americans among legal *partners* is 1.83%, and the representation of African American legal *associates* is slightly higher (4.48%). The programs offered at our law schools – The University of Baltimore School of Law and Historically Black Colleges and Universities Student Pipeline Cooperative Scholars and the University of Maryland School of Law Diversity and Inclusion Scholars -- are unique and serious programs that represent strong commitments to increasing diversity within the legal field. These programs need to be supported.

SB 435 provides necessary funding to these law school programs to expand the number of student participants. It also provides funding to Maryland’s four HBCUs to supplement an existing office or individual’s role at each HBCU to guide undergraduate students to these opportunities.

SB 435 is the smart way to bring us one step closer to achieving greater diversity on Maryland’s judicial benches, in our courtrooms, and law firms—roles that have a great impact on our society. I urge the committee’s favorable report of SB 435.