

Maryland Independent College
and University Association

140 SOUTH STREET
ANNAPOLIS, MD 21401

PHONE: 410-269-0306
FAX: 410-269-5905
www.micua.org

Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

SB 647 (Lam) Election Law – Institutions of Higher Education – Voter Registration and Voting by Students (Student Voter Empowerment Act of 2020)

Sara Fidler, President, sfidler@micua.org

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Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony to support with amendments **Senate Bill 647 Election Law – Institutions of Higher Education – Voter Registration and Voting by Students (Student Voter Empowerment Act of 2020)**. MICUA member institutions serve almost 66,000 students in 180 locations throughout the State, and we are proud to be able to offer over 1,600 programs to our students. We support and encourage civic activity on campuses and launch “Get Out the Vote” efforts for every election. In 2019, several of our institutions participated in the ALL IN Challenge which seeks to increase student democratic engagement. Several of our institutions reported student voter participation rates of 40% or higher. Of note, Maryland Institute College of Art has one of the highest student voter participation rates in the country!

In addition to other requirements, SB 647 requires private nonprofit institutions of higher education to provide a link to the online voter registration system operated by the State Board of Elections in a location where it may be easily viewed by students registering for course work. If there are fewer than 15 clicks on the link, the institution must report to MICUA, and in turn, MICUA must report to specified committees of the General Assembly, regarding efforts to relocate the link; a description of the steps the institution is taking to encourage students to use the link; and efforts to improve access to voter registration for students at the institution.

Our **first set of amendments** addresses the reporting requirements of the bill. We clarify that MICUA will only collect reports from member institutions, not from all private nonprofit institutions in the State. This amendment also alters the reporting requirement so that only the number of clicks must be reported, not whether the clicks were made by students who are residents of Maryland. The provisions of the bill, as drafted, would be very difficult to track and may present privacy concerns. This amendment also alters the report such that it no longer requires a screen shot of the link before and after it is relocated in the event that there have been fewer than 15 clicks. We are committed to making the portal useful to students;

however, we feel that details regarding the location of the link on our webpages, the size or color of the font, or other aesthetics relating to the portal may become administratively burdensome.

The bill also requires a private nonprofit institution of higher education that awards baccalaureate degrees, enrolls 4,500 or more students, and provides on-campus housing to have a separate precinct on the campus of the institution. As drafted, this would apply to two MICUA member institutions: Johns Hopkins University and Loyola University Maryland.

Our **second set of amendments** makes changes to these requirements in order to remove Loyola University Maryland. By limiting the number of students to be 4,500 or more *undergraduate* students, only Johns Hopkins University will be included. Issues of parking availability, campus security, accessibility for individuals with disabilities, and other logistics can present grave challenges for some of our urban campuses. This amendment also specifies that a local board of elections may not use the requirement to establish a separate precinct on campus as the *sole basis* for closing a precinct located near, but off-campus.

Voting is the cornerstone of a strong democracy and there is a strong educational and civic component to the process that all MICUA members support. MICUA thanks the sponsor and the committee for considering the attached amendments as this legislation is debated.

AMENDMENTS TO SB 647 BY MICUA

AMENDMENT NO. 1

On page 1, in lines 22, 23, and 30, in each instance, after “private” insert “nonprofit”; and in line 30, after “requiring” insert “certain”.

On page 2, in line 4, after “private” insert “nonprofit”; in line 6, after “the” insert “primary”; and in line 8, after “campus;” insert “prohibiting a local board from using a certain requirement as the sole basis for closing a certain precinct;”.

On page 7, in line 20, after “PRIVATE” insert “NONPROFIT”.

On page 8, in line 28, after “PRIVATE” insert “NONPROFIT”; in line 30, after “STATE” insert “AND IS A MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATION”.

On pages 8 and 9, strike beginning with “STUDENTS” in line 32 on page 8 down through “STUDENTS” in line 1 on page 9 and substitute “PEOPLE”.

On page 9, strike beginning with the colon in line 5 down through “C.” in line 10; in line 12, after “PRIVATE” insert “NONPROFIT”; and strike beginning with “PRIVATE” in line 16 down through “EDUCATION” in line 17 and substitute “ITS MEMBERS”.

AMENDMENT NO. 2

On page 10, in lines 2, 23, and 29, in each instance, after “PRIVATE” insert “NONPROFIT”; in line 26, after “MORE” insert “UNDERGRADUATE”; in line 29, after “THE” insert “PRIMARY”; after line 31, insert:

“(III) A LOCAL BOARD MAY NOT USE THE REQUIREMENTS OF SUBPARAGRAPH (II) OF THIS PARAGRAPH AS THE SOLE BASIS FOR CLOSING A PRECINCT NEAR THE CAMPUS.”;

and in line 32, strike “(III)” and substitute “(IV)”.