



HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
House Bill 1512 – The Maryland Internship Opportunities Program
March 9, 2021
Urging a Favorable Report

Madam Chair, Vice Chair and members of the House Appropriations committee, for the record I am Tom Sadowski, Vice Chancellor for Economic Development with the University System of Maryland, and I thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts regarding House Bill 1512.

The Maryland Internship Opportunities Program builds on the success of the Maryland Technology Internship Program, which fosters and supports internships at technology-based businesses in Maryland.

Technology-based businesses are vital to Maryland's economy, but cannot continue to move Maryland forward by themselves. Innovative humanities-based businesses, many of which are technology-enabled, are also critical to a robust economy and the high quality of living enjoyed by Marylanders. The University System of Maryland (USM) itself supports more than 110 new startups each year across a wide range of industries, including those related to the humanities. The USM also nurtures talented students across the visual arts, social work, community health, and social justice.

The current pandemic highlights the need not only for innovative technology, such as medical countermeasures, but also innovation in communication, community health and social work, as Maryland endeavors to respond and recover. Many of these roles are found at non-profits and in the public sector, where student talent can be transformative, but where robust pipelines for talent may not exist.

Another important feature of HB1512 is the set aside of 50% of the internships for businesses with fewer than 150 employees. This feature benefits students, small companies, and other employers in Maryland. Students interning at small companies receive unparalleled experiential learning. Small companies greatly benefit from onboarding talented students— and in the event that student is not hired full-time— their skill and value as a potential employee is greatly enhanced for other Maryland employers.

Small businesses and startup companies do not always have the resources necessary to support internship programs. These firms often do not have full-time HR personnel, may not be able to offer competitive pay, or possess “brand name” recognition with students. They can, however, be wonderful environments in which student interns can learn, thrive, and grow. Students, in turn, can be vital to the growth of their employer and contribute to the development of an innovation-led economy in Maryland.

The proposed Maryland Internship Opportunities Program also helps contribute to efforts focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion. According to the National Association of Credential Evaluations Services (NACES), race, gender, and the parents' education often determine whether a student can obtain a paid versus unpaid internship –contributing to widening disparities in experience gained and compensation earned. The University of Maryland, Baltimore County has a long history of working with employers to responsibly recruit and retain a diverse pool of candidates and is well-positioned to expand this effort via the Maryland Opportunities program. Too often, students find a business in the community that can provide excellent experience through an internship, but they must take a position elsewhere that offers better compensation. The Maryland Opportunities program would mean more students get placed in paid internships, that can ultimately position them for higher paying jobs later in life.

HB1215, through the creation of the Maryland Internship Opportunities Program, will expand access to experiential learning and internship opportunities for students across the state of Maryland. More importantly, it will also provide a true pathway for our students to employment that will enhance their skill level, value to Maryland employers and ultimately, keep them here— driving a robust and diverse economy in the state of Maryland for generations to come.

For these reasons, I respectfully request your favorable report on HB1215.