



HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

House Bill 184

University System of Maryland, Morgan State University, and St. Mary's College of Maryland - Board Membership - Alterations

February 10, 2021

Unfavorable

Chair McIntosh, Vice Chair Chang and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts regarding House Bill 184. The bill alters the membership of the Board of Regents (BOR) of the University System of Maryland (USM) to increase the number of members.

The Board of Regents is a diverse body. There are 18 seated Regents at this time, and a third of the Board are from minority groups. The USM Regents are diverse in the backgrounds they bring to the Board. They hail from industry, public service, law, banking, business, and our student population. When faced with matters in which their expertise is light or lacking, the Board seeks external experts to inform and advise the body, just as we did this year with issues of epidemiology and public health policy.

Currently, five Regents are African American, and one is Asian-American. We recognize that there are so many ways in which we can improve upon our diversity and do hope that future appointments consider opportunities to make the board more representative. Four Regents boast education from HBCUs. Regent Gourdine (Tougaloo College), Regent Johnson (Morgan State University), and Regent Leggett (Southern University and Howard University) are alumni of HBCUs. One of the Board's Student Regents is a student at University of Maryland Eastern Shore. She follows – two years later – another Student Regent from UMES, Langston Frazier.

House Bill 184 seeks to codify the addition of regents with backgrounds in labor union organizing, immigration advocacy, and civil rights. However, there are many other key issues that would benefit from an individual regent's subject proficiency. What's to stop the pressure from adding more areas of expertise – for instance, public health or pandemic preparedness?

It is essential that Regents view themselves and their function not as one of a particular special interest or skewed toward a particular campus, but as members of a Board dedicated to the objective of governance and management of the University System of Maryland and its constituent institutions.

The Board is committed to ensuring that each of the USM's institutions receives due attention. Board meetings rotate on a schedule to ensure the Board has visited every campus in the system over a cycle of three years. They meet with each president throughout the year routinely and as

needed. The Board also recently implemented a Board liaison program that assigns a Regent to each campus to provide a deeper connection between the Board and individual campuses.

For the reasons above, we ask the committee to issue an unfavorable report on House Bill 184.