

Testimony in Support of House Bill 1215- Maryland Technology Internship Program

Name: Rehman Liaqat

School: UMBC

Major: (and list any student organization affiliations)

B.A. in Political Science, Global Studies | Minor in Law and Justice

Master's in public policy

SGA Executive Finance Board Representative

UMBC Student Hearing Board

UMBC Political Science Council of Majors, Vice President

Pi Sigma Alpha, UMBC Representative

The Center for Democracy and Civic Life, Student Affiliate; ASB 2021 Leader

The Shriver Center at UMBC, FYE Leader, Peer mentor

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Madam Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Rehman Liaqat, and I am a Junior at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) studying Political Science, Global Studies, and Public Policy. I have interned at the Maryland Office of the Public Defender. Through my experiential learning experiences, I have attained leadership and teamwork skills, gained clarity into my future career prospects, and experienced an immersive period of self-growth. I was given first-hand insight into many fields of legal proceedings that I had never witnessed. My daily routine consists of shadowing licensed Public Defenders in their daily dockets (3 dockets a day 10-20 cases per docket), filing, case-briefing, and also researching. One of the main projects I helped lead was the Maryland Police Project which focused on how police misconduct is treated in different parts of Maryland along with enforcing legislation which demands for accountability for any form of misconduct such as evidence tampering and police brutality. Shadowing the Public Defenders involved overseeing more than 20 clients a day—from minor traffic violations or assault cases to heavy murder trials.

I learned through my time that we cannot fix everything or magically make the world a better place, instead, we do as much good as we can and make a difference as we save as many starfish as we can. I believe that my mentoring public defenders help individuals get through some of the darkest times of their lives and I truly felt like I made a difference being a part of the team. I began to adopt principles of ambition and resiliency as I was given the opportunity to experience helping individuals through some of their darkest times. I learned from both the public defenders I shadowed and through my conversations with the clients that just because we may take a few steps back in life, it should not mean we do not have the right to an equitable opportunity to move forward. At times, I felt like a small fish swimming in a whole new body of the open sea, however, my site supervisor (Chastity Simpson) and members of the UMBC Internships and Employment team aided me through the process of instituting my field of studies into effect and experiencing the legal field in real-time. The experience was truly a moment of enlightenment that will forever stick with me as I plan on attending Law School soon and entering the legal field.

This is all the hands-on experience I could only get in an internship site. Without these experiences, I would not have the network or professional experience I have today. However, the experiences would not have been possible if I had not been privileged enough to receive the UMBC Student Internship & Service Fund to aid in the financial burdens that the internship required. Our daily expenses as interns included transportation, meals throughout the day (sometimes all three meals), technological equipment, and even professional attire. For me, I had lived across town from the Office of the Public Defender which made it quite difficult for me to intern without adequate transportation. At times, the workload was so intense that we were asked to stay late during the evenings which required us to buy and sustain for three meals a day. I

remember having to purchase my first actual suit to meet the standards of professionalism required for the internship. Due to COVID-19, a large portion of our work was done online which required adequate internet, purchasing a laptop, and software used at the Office. Without an alleviation of such financial burdens and pressure, students are unable to have the experiences in their fields of interest that is needed to succeed in their academic and career endeavors.

I am here to express my support for House Bill 1215 which will provide more internship opportunities to students in liberal arts majors across the state of Maryland. By creating and building the Maryland Opportunities Fund, more students who struggle with paid internship opportunities in non-technical majors will have the ability to have an internship experience. Internships stimulate growth outside of the classroom, allow students to build their professional network and round out a student's early career to make them a more competitive candidate as they enter the workforce.

This program would positively impact workforce development in Maryland and provide financial support to companies working towards arts, education and social justice. I urge you to vote favorably for HB 1215. Thank you for your time.

Rehman Liaqat

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rehman Liaqat', written in a cursive style.

How long (2min), submit?, definitely

Connection between OPD internship and Law school; impact of unpaid internships

Address: the appropriations committee

Maggie Macintosh

Good afternoon madam chairman and members of the committee

Salisbury MD District

Annie MI

Christine ROUTZAHN DIT