



**House Appropriations  
House Bill 1159  
Higher Education – Community College Credits – General Education Courses  
March 16, 2021  
Favorable with Amendments  
Joann Boughman, Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs**

House Bill 1159 makes assurances that courses taken at a community college in general education will transfer to toward a bachelor's degree without further review or testing requirement. USM institutions already accept credits toward a bachelor's degree. However, it must be noted that there are situations in which a course does not transfer as credit toward the major, but instead will be applied as elective credit. These instances occur when a course is in a major that is accredited by its discipline at the 4-year institution, but not at the community college. An example is a basic social science course may not be accepted toward a major in Social Work if the accrediting agency states that all courses in the major must be taken in an accredited program. No legislation can overrule the regulations imposed by an accrediting body.

USM does request one amendment. The bill currently states:

*“The Commission and each public institution of higher education shall develop and implement incentives for students to obtain an associate’s degree before enrolling in a public senior institution of higher education. (2)(d)”*

We agree, wholeheartedly, that for those students who start their education in a community college, completion of the AA degree is important. In fact, our institutions do provide special financial aid packages to students who transfer, and we look forward to enhancing the reverse transfer process as well. However, to require four-year institutions to incentivize the completion of an associate's degree before enrolling in a four-year institution will have detrimental effects on the four-year institutions, since there are still many students who do and will continue to choose to attend a four-year institution first.

**We recommend the language be amended to say:**

**“The Commission and each public institution of higher education shall develop and implement incentives for students WHO BEGIN AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES to obtain an associate’s degree before enrolling in a public senior institution of higher education.”**

The USM is working very hard to improve the articulation system platform (ARTSYS) that provides students, staff, and faculty information about recommended articulation pathways, course transfer equivalency, and automates many of the current data management processes for transfer students in Maryland. The USM is greatly challenged to be handed this unfunded mandate that the System develop and provide the articulation platform for all students in higher education in Maryland. The development and implementation of the articulation system platform – ARTSYS - is costly, and we are doing our best to provide this system in this very difficult financial environment. Since there has been no state funding to support this effort, it is taking longer than anticipated to fully implement.

The USM is committed to improving the transfer process, and we will continue to work toward the goal of smooth transfer of community college credits into our four-year institutions. USM is favorable with amendments for House Bill 1159. Thank you for considering our testimony.



### **About the University System of Maryland**

The University System of Maryland (USM)—one system made up of 12 institutions, three regional centers, and a central office—awards 8 out of every 10 bachelor’s degrees in the State of Maryland. The USM is governed by a Board of Regents, comprised of 21 members from diverse professional and personal backgrounds. The chancellor, Dr. Jay Perman, oversees and manages the operations of USM. However, each constituent institution is run by its own president who has authority over that university. Each of USM’s 12 institutions has a distinct and unique approach to the mission of educating students and promoting the economic, intellectual, and cultural growth of its surrounding community. These institutions are located throughout the state, from western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, with the flagship campus in the Washington suburbs. The USM includes Historically Black Colleges and Universities, comprehensive institutions, research universities, and the country’s largest public online institution.