



Testimony in Support of House Bill 1295: University System of Maryland - Student Fees - Review and Retention

Written Testimony from the University System of Maryland Student Council
March 16, 2021

The University System of Maryland Student Council (USMSC) represents over 172,000 students across 12 higher education institutions and three regional centers. The USMSC works to collectively listen and identify the concerns most relevant to our student constituents. Of perennial importance is the affordability, access, and transparency of costs related to higher education for students and their families. HB1295 is supported by the USMSC because it reinforces USM policy that we view as essential to the transparency of the fee process, inclusion of student in the process, and follow through of intended student fee allocation.

The USMSC members voted early on in the 2020-2021 term to form and invest time and energy in the student fee process. The committee has gathered and listened across the USM institution to multiple concerns arising from lack of clarity, understanding and transparency. Issues like these are solvable and, we would argue, beneficial to the entire university community. From what we have heard, a couple USM institutions excel at adherence to USM student fee policy and the spirit of shared governance, but the majority lack key pieces needed to ensure the success of the process implementation leaving students “in the dark” and questioning how decisions that are being made truly center their needs and experiences over an institution’s bottom line.

HB1295 specifically cites a pre-pandemic example at the state’s flagship institution that manifested multiple underlying process and transparency issues when a reversion was implemented. At first, students were not proactively informed. Subsequently, after students sought clarity and understanding, it quickly became doubtful that this process happened appropriately. Without question, the expedited decision detrimentally impacted units that students wished for their fee money to support and this problem was compounded as units conveyed to students that the reversion caused deficits that would be remedied through future fee increases. This reallocation of funds dismissed entire prior processes and shared. This approach is problematic and one that students want to see remedied before similar approaches are taken at peer institutions across the USM.

We thank Delegate Ivey for sponsoring HB1295 which brings to the forefront the complex and needed discussion to reevaluate the current misalignment at USM institutions of their individual student fee advisory processes with the already established but not consistently followed USM policy.

The USMSC membership voted in overwhelming support of the proposed bill and hope the bill receives a favorable vote in the MGA this year. Thank you for your time and consideration.



Sincerely,

The USMSC Student Council, representing student leadership from:

*Bowie State University
Coppin State University
Frostburg State University
Salisbury University
The Universities at Shady Grove
Towson University
University of Baltimore
University of Maryland, Baltimore
University of Maryland, Baltimore County
University of Maryland, College Park
University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science
University of Maryland Eastern Shore
University of Maryland Global Campus*