

Coppin State University
Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 0001
Historically Black Colleges and Universities - Funding
Budget & Taxation Committee
Chair: Senator Guy Guzzone
January 20, 2021

Good Morning, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee:

On behalf of the students, faculty, and staff of Coppin State University, I would like to thank you for your diligent work in support of higher education, in general, and our historically black institutions of higher education, in particular. Your unwavering support in serving the educational needs and aspirations of the well-deserving residents of this great State is appreciated and needed, now, as never before. I share your commitment to this advocacy of higher education and, especially, to the advocacy of the equitable allocation of funding to HBCUs.

It is my sincere hope that Senate Bill 0001, the Historically Black Colleges and Universities – Funding bill, sponsored by Senator Charles E. Sydnor III, and a host of distinguished Senators, will become law. This monumental legislation would afford Coppin State University a unique opportunity to begin to remedy decades of previous, traceable, state-supported inequities in the unnecessary duplication of programs which harmed Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the State. As the legislation properly articulates, this “... has exacerbated the racial identifiability of Maryland’s Historically Black Colleges and Universities.”

Coppin State University serves students who come from historically underserved and underrepresented communities—a majority of them from low-income households. Research has shown that the task of lifting low-income students out of poverty through a college education has been left to HBCUs, like Coppin. Research also shows that the needs of these students places a significant strain on a university’s finances, retention, and graduation rates. There is no question that Coppin has been committed to fulfilling this need to aid in the advancement of our students; however, the State’s underfunding of the University has hindered the ability to be more competitive with other, more generously funded institutions of higher learning.

In restoring an equitable distribution of funding to all of our HBCUs, SB0001 would serve to bolster our educational reach by legislatively mandating more flexibility than the federal suit would judicially provide. SB0001 would enable Coppin State University to utilize the funds allocated for the following:

- (i) Scholarships and financial aid support services;
- (ii) Faculty recruitment and development;
- (iii) Expanding and improving existing academic programs, including online programs;
- (iv) Development and implementation of new academic programs, including online programs;
- (v) Academic support; and,
- (vi) Marketing.

The funding provided by the bill will enable our institution to expand programmatic activities and offerings. A significant by-product of this expansion of programmatic activities and offerings is increased workforce development, which I know is a pillar of interest to this legislative body. This bill could serve to sharpen our students' competitive edge in the workforce which would enhance the overall economic standing of the State of Maryland and the nation. Of equal importance, however, is that an equitable distribution and allocation of funding will provide enormous and consequential enhancements to our institutions' abilities to service their student populations and surrounding communities in a more impactful and multifaceted manner.

I appreciate the committee's invitation for the opportunity to convey what I believe to be the imperatives of passage and ultimate enactment of Senate Bill 0001.



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President
Coppin State University