



SENATE BUDGET AND TAXATION COMMITTEE

Senate Bill 0001

Historically Black Colleges and Universities – Funding

January 20, 2021

Favorable

Aminta H. Breaux, Ph.D., President

Chair Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to comment on Senate Bill 0001. As the President of Bowie State University -- Maryland's oldest historically black university -- I support Senate Bill 0001, which would resolve longstanding litigation over the issues of *de jure* segregation in Maryland's public higher education system. I applaud Senator Sydnor and members of the legislature for hearing our voices in a time when HBCUs require greater resources and support more than ever before, as the economic impact of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) looms overhead our public institutions.

The ongoing pandemic has only strengthened our resolve to ensure Bowie State University and other HBCUs receive funding that is fair and equitable. By establishing the HBCU Reserve Fund, we can ensure our institutions can continue to improve their academic resources and educational experiences for students to graduate equipped with the ability to confront the many challenges our nation faces.

Our Strategic Plan, entitled *Racing to Excellence*, remains grounded in three main priorities: achieving academic excellence; promoting student success; and ensuring the long-term viability of Bowie State University. The university has been working hard to move this shared agenda and we have seen significant progress. At a time when institutions across the country - especially HBCUs - are seeing declining enrollment or worst - having to close their doors -- Bowie State University is growing. We continue to see increased demand to deliver education to more citizens in our community. We need the resources to meet that demand and ensure our communities remain strong.

As of January 5, we have seen a 75% increase in our first-time admitted students for our spring 2021 semester compared to last year, and the number of admitted students into our graduate school has increased 29%. Also, as of January 5, the number of admitted undergraduate students for fall 2021 has also increased 21% and applications saw over a 20% increase in December 2020. Our fall 2020 enrollment was 6,250 with students who hail from 32 states and 27 foreign countries.

Bowie State currently offers 23 undergraduate majors, 20 master's degrees, 2 doctoral degrees and 14 post-baccalaureate certificates. We continue to exceed MHEC's projections for degree production, and we are doing our part to produce workforce-ready graduates. MHEC also approved our request to offer

distance education programs to offer our students a greater degree of flexibility in pursuing their studies. More students are pursuing degrees in high-demand STEM fields at Bowie State than ever before.

Building on our strengths in cyber security, computing and technology; business and professional studies; as well as education, our faculty are working to enhance existing programs and develop new, innovative programs to meet Maryland's workforce needs. Therefore, we are in need of the necessary funding to develop and market these programs, recruit and retain outstanding faculty, and offer competitiveness scholarships/financial aid packages to attract and retain a diverse population of students.

Senate Bill 0001 would provide the funding we need in areas that are critical to Bowie State University's continued growth and competitiveness: new/expanded academic programs; scholarships/financial aid; academic support; faculty development; and marketing. This funding is important to our long-term viability and the economic prosperity of the region. The funds will also help Bowie State University diversify our enrollment by making us a campus of choice for more students seeking an affordable, high-quality education. Diversity is important to the educational experience for all of our students. Indeed, one of the five goals in our Strategic Plan is to enhance our campus culture of diversity and inclusion. Inclusivity is also one of our core values.

As one of the nation's top HBCUs according to *U.S. News & World Report*, and the ninth best HBCU in the nation according to *BestColleges.com*, Bowie State University is poised for even greater contributions to the state as one of the fastest growing institutions in Maryland. To continue this momentum, we require continued investment from our state legislature as our world continues to evolve in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. The investment contemplated in Senate Bill 0001 would position Bowie State to fulfill its mission as a public institution for generations to come and to serve the public good.

On behalf of Bowie State University, our students, faculty, staff and alumni, I thank the members of the General Assembly for their support and I urge a favorable report for Senate Bill 0001.