

**January 21, 2021**

**Testimony on SB 1
Historically Black Colleges and Universities – Funding
Budget and Taxation**

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland supports SB 1 which would require the Governor to include in the annual State operating budget \$57,700,000 to be allocated to certain historically black colleges and universities; establishing the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Reserve Fund.

We believe Maryland should be doing all that it can to give students the tools to become the next generation of leaders in our state and nation. This includes providing students with equal access to higher education at excellent and affordable colleges and universities, including Maryland's HBCUs: Bowie State University (BSU), Coppin State University (CSU), Morgan State University (MSU), and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES).

To support these efforts, we ourselves made a decision to invest in our state HBCUs, launching the HBCU Student Action Alliance which now has five student Fellows from three of our state HBCUs with a goal of expanding to all four campuses. Our student leaders focus on helping to boost civic engagement and promoting the value of becoming lifelong participants in democracy on their campus and in surrounding communities. This program is modeled after our North Carolina office where they have been working with HBCU students for over a decade. Our Fellows, in 2020, decided to prioritize supporting efforts to ensure their campus receives the funding it deserves.

Quote from one of our HBCU Democracy Fellows Autumn Wardlaw (Coppin State Univ.),

“HBCU’s were founded out of a commitment to service, community, and opportunity for African Americans. Without adequate and fair funding, they are unable to continue to live out their mission and goal. The lack of funding has caused HBCU’s to decrease the services they provide to students that help us to serve our community and be engaged community members.”

As an organization that is working to strengthen our democracy, securing adequate funding for our state HBCU’s is important to us because it helps ensure we are investing in students like Autumn. Students who are civically engaged on their campus and community, who are interested in policy issues, and who want to encourage those around them to make their voices heard.

Historically Black colleges and universities throughout the state should be adequately funded as this is an investment our future leaders, ensuring that their campuses can afford to maintain an environment that will allow students to hone their civic obligations and political awareness.

We urge a favorable report.

