Support

House Ways and Means Committee

SB 283 (Elfreth) Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act

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Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony to support **Senate Bill 283 Student and Military Voter Empowerment Act**. MICUA member institutions serve almost 66,000 students in 180 locations throughout the State, and we are proud to be able to offer over 1,600 programs to our students. In addition to other requirements, SB 283 requires institutions of higher education to provide a link to the online voter registration system operated by the State Board of Elections in a location where it may be easily viewed by students registering for course work. The bill also includes a related annual reporting requirement. We would be happy to assist the student voter engagement effort in this manner.

MICUA schools support and encourage civic activity on campuses and launch "Get Out the Vote (GOTV)" efforts for every election. In 2019, several of our institutions participated in the national ALL IN Challenge, which seeks to increase student democratic engagement. Of note, Maryland Institute College of Art was awarded the honor of the highest registration rate in the country and Johns Hopkins University was noted as having the most improved voting rate at a large, private four-year institution.

A few examples of our commitment to support student voter engagement are provided below:

• **Goucher College** – The Goucher Voter Mobilization Team met virtually at the beginning of Fall 2020 to plan voter engagement events through Zoom and share stories about why they wanted to GOTV. Washington Monthly recognized Goucher as one of America's best colleges for student voting in 2020.

• **Hood College** – Hood has a vested interest in student voter participation since 1918. The Class of 1918 dedicated one of the four columns on Alumnae Hall to represent democracy as one of Hood's core values. The "Hood Votes" campaign urges students to GOTV through videos, social media, and virtual educational events. The virtual events highlighted the institution's role in the suffrage movement, explained the electoral college, and hosted a watch party on election night.

- **Loyola University Maryland** – Through LoyolaVotes, students participate in TurboVote, an online platform to provide resources about voter registration, absentee ballots, and election information to students, faculty, staff, administrators, and surrounding community. Turbo Vote ranked Loyola for the second consecutive year for voting initiatives. In 2019, Loyola was awarded the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge Silver Seal for their increased participation in student voting.

- **McDaniel College** – McDaniel pulled in many campus offices to coordinate voter registration drives, such as McDaniel's Office of Student Engagement, Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Hoover Library, and the political science department as well as the Carroll County League of Women Voters. Also engaged were student groups such as the Hispano-Latinx Alliance, Alpha Phi Omega, Black Student Union, Green Life, and Sunrise Movement. Corin Cole of Glen Burnie, MD, Black Student Union representative, stated that "if students see other student leaders advocating for voting, then they are more inclined to get involved."

- **Washington College** – The Student Government Association at Washington College created a "Flock to the Polls" challenge to increase student participation in the 2020 presidential election. Faculty and staff joined the challenge! For every 50 students who took the "I Voted" pledge, the adults in the room vowed to dye their hair or beards pink, wear Halloween costumes to class, create TikTok videos, or take a chilly plunge in the Chester River. Interim Provost and Dean of the College Michael Harvey made good on his promise wearing academic regalia and jumped in the Chester River. There is photographic proof in the MICUA Winter 2021 Newsletter! The students collectively agreed that although the semester was virtual, the voting challenge kept them connected to faculty and students.

Voting is the cornerstone of a strong democracy and there is an educational and civic component to the process that all MICUA member institutions support. We thank the sponsor for working with us last year and for brainstorming with us over the interim to craft legislation this year that fosters civic engagement in a way that is both meaningful and beneficial to all of Maryland's students.

MICUA urges a favorable Committee report for SB 283.