

Student Fee Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Baitman, Benjamin

Position: FAV

Information Sheet for House Bill 1295 / Senate Bill 895

Student Fees – Review and Retention

[HB1295/SB895](#) seeks to **improve transparency** in how student fee money is spent and requires that the money is **spent in the way it was intended**. The bill was proposed in response to budgetary actions taken at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMD) that resulted in student fees revenues being spent in a manner inconsistent with the policies of the University System of Maryland (USM).

In 2019, **UMD's state funding was reduced by \$3.9 million**. This occurred at the same time that the University adopted a new budget model, which allowed the University more flexibility in distributing funds across campus units and departments. A [May 2019 email](#) from University administrators announced that “5% of all campus fund balances will be moved to a ‘campus initiatives’ account managed by the chief financial officer (CFO) to support **one-time** strategic initiatives...” In the fund sweep, also known as a reversion, **various campus units and departments** that are funded either in part or in full by student fees **lost significant amounts of their fund balances**. These include, but are not limited to:

- \$1,824,950 from the Department of Resident Life, 100% of which came from non-mandatory fees.
- \$463,000 from Dining Services, 100% of which came from non-mandatory fees.
- \$115,168 from the Department of Transportation Services, 100% of which came from mandatory and non-mandatory fees.
- \$567,377 from the Stamp Student Union, 80% of which came from mandatory fees.
- \$450,269 from University Recreation & Wellness, 90% of which came from mandatory fees.
- \$61,322 from the Student Government Association, 100% of which came from mandatory fees.
- \$10,488 from the Graduate Student Government, 100% of which came from mandatory fees.
- \$179,065 from the University Health Center.
- \$2,000 from the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center.

As a result, many of these departments had to **postpone renovations, delay services, or request increases** to the fee that they charge students every year.

Under [Section VIII-2.50](#) of the USM bylaws, student fees are defined as:

- **Mandatory Fees**, which are, “charged and applicable to all undergraduate and/or graduate students,” and, “provide revenue for the support of operations that are available and for use of the entire student body;” and
- **Non-Mandatory Fees**, which are charged to subsets of students enrolled in certain programs or majors that carry additional expenses.

Information Sheet for House Bill 1295 / Senate Bill 895

Student Fees – Review and Retention

These fees are charged for specific reasons, and with specific intentions for how they are ultimately spent by the departments or units. [The student fee process](#) is complex and ultimate authority resides with the Board of Regents, the USM's governing body; however, when it comes to fees, the Regents generally approve what the institution presidents recommend.

Another email from October 2019 ([1](#), [2](#)) announced that the 5% campus sweep **collected a total of nearly \$23 million** to be used for projects including:

- A new roof for the Biology-Psychology building, and HVAC for the HJ Patterson building.
- Reducing University-held debt.
- Paying for research compliance costs related to animal care and research misconduct.
- Improving stormwater management.
- The \$210 million Cole Field House sports research center.
- Economic development projects in the greater College Park area.

These are all important priorities for the University and provide a benefit to our community and our standing as an institution of higher education. However, **they are not projects that student fee revenues should be spent on.** The fund sweep resulted in millions of dollars in student fee revenues being directed to projects for which the money was not approved and that do not serve the general student body. This inappropriate siphoning of funding meant to serve students in specific ways violates the fee-setting process, USM policy, and prevents students from receiving the services that they pay for.

Student fee money should not be used beyond the original intent of the fee or for general University use. It is approved, paid, and collected for specific department operations and services that are accessible and available to the students who paid the fees. Construction projects, administrative costs, and other initiatives should not be prioritized at the detriment of the services that students were told that they were charged for.

[HB1295/SB895](#) requires that student fees be expended the way that they were intended to when the fee was originally requested. With the understanding that institutions in the USM are fiscally complex and in a difficult financial situation brought on by the pandemic, the bill allows institutions to spend revenues derived from student fees in a manner beyond the intended purpose of the fee, as long as the institution's student fee review committee reviews the exception. While this bill deals with financial and procedural concerns, **the core issue is one of transparency**, something that all members of the USM community should appreciate.

For more information, please contact Ben Baitman, sgagovaffiars@umd.edu. Find your elected officials under the "Lookup" tab [on this page](#).

MEMORANDUM

TO: Deans and Budget Officers

FROM: Mary Ann Rankin, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost
Carlo Colella, Vice President for Administration and Finance and Chief Business Officer

DATE: May 31, 2019

SUBJECT: New FY20 budget model and its impacts on state reductions, tenured faculty departures, and fund balance holding practices

As you know, the University System of Maryland (USM) received a \$10 million base state budget reduction during the recently concluded session of the Maryland General Assembly. It is important to note that the state of Maryland cut these funds in direct response to the large fund balances being held across the campus. UMD's share of this base funding reduction is \$3.9 million. If this cut were distributed across campus units uniformly as has been done in the past, many critical instructional and student service programs would be negatively impacted. Therefore, and as further explained below, the **central campus will fully absorb this state base cut**, reducing its spending activity so that **no other division will receive an FY20 base budget reduction**.

This reduction arrives as the campus is nearing completion of several transformative projects designed to enhance the consistency, sustainability, and transparency of our financial and budgetary approaches. One such project, undertaken in partnership with Deloitte, has yielded a new budget model that adapts nationwide best practices to suit UMD's fiscal landscape. The new model integrates budgets, cash balances, and strategic priorities into a holistic system of resource distribution that ensures all divisions receive sufficient base funding to realize their state-supported mission while also creating a clear governance structure to manage future funding stemming from in-unit changes.

A major benefit of this model is the broadening of the fund sources used to support state activity; primarily the inclusion of tuition revenue increases into the resource base. This means that— in addition to absorbing the base budget cut— a significant amount of previously centralized funds will be distributed to the divisions in a process which is termed "rebasings." These actions are being taken to sustain the positive trajectory established by our remodeling effort to date, which will continue into the next fiscal year.

To maintain this enhanced support to divisions, the new budget model will introduce two mechanisms to make funds available for strategic campus investments and better manage the fund balances held by all divisions to prevent future legislative reductions. Beginning in Fiscal Year 2020:

5% of all campus fund balances will be moved to a "campus initiatives" account managed by the chief financial officer to support one-time strategic initiatives, such as the costly design and implementation of an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system. Specific detail on the uses of these funds and each division's share will be sent under separate cover. Importantly, DRIF, MIPS, and cost share funds will not be swept.

Our goal is for the campus to earn a high return on investment on available resources, and we are committed to transparently detail how financial decisions related to these investments are being made.

We call upon you to be partners in the process so that, rather than accumulating funds in isolation, we are collectively empowered by this new budget model and are able to collaboratively build up our programs and our institution as a whole.

From: Mary Ann Rankin <mrankin@umd.edu>
Date: October 15, 2019 at 2:11:03 PM EDT
To: PVPDDD@LISTSERV.UMD.EDU
Subject: [3DS] Details regarding Fund Balance Sweep
Reply-To: Mary Ann Rankin <mrankin@umd.edu>

To: Deans, Directors and Department Heads
From: Mary Ann Rankin, Senior Vice President and Provost
Re: Details regarding Fund Balance Sweep
Date: October 15, 2019

The budget model redesign project, sponsored by the Office of the Provost and the Vice President for Administration & Finance continues. This memo provides further detail on the fund balance sweep which occurred at the end of FY19 for your information and for the sake of transparency.

The sweep collected a total of **\$22.98 million** from every division holding fund balances. It resulted in all units **avoiding a 1% base budget cut**.

The university has used these funds to create a central investment fund. The investment fund's primary purpose is to finance strategic projects that will allow us to:

- 1) Invest in academic, research, public service, and economic development activity across campus;
- 2) Provide financial returns through increased efficiencies; and/or
- 3) Reduce substantial risks.

The major projects that will be financed by this fund in FY20 include:

- Modernizing our administrative and technology infrastructure
 - o Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) to replace our obsolete Student Information System and Human Resource System. Costs incurred in the first year of the ERP project are primarily for staffing and consultant costs
- TerpEngage, a Constituent Relationship Management (CRM) system powered by Salesforce to streamline connections with students, alumni, faculty and staff.
- Physical infrastructure renewal/upgrades:
 - o New roof for the Biology-Psychology building and HVAC for HJ Patterson
 - o Replacement of our main power plant (the NextGen project)
- Financial investments that generate additional revenue streams
 - o Funding a quasi-endowment with higher earning potential than funds held by the State Treasury. These proceeds will fund financial aid and facility renewal.
 - o Reducing debt that has higher interest costs than the interest earned on funds held as fund balances.
- Eliminating safety and compliance risks.

- Paying for research compliance costs related to animal care and research misconduct.
- Funding hazardous waste removal and making storm water management improvements.
- Greater College Park Initiative facility projects:
 - o Cole Field House's state-of-the-art sports research center
 - o Discovery District: a research park combining academic spaces, student amenities, and public-private ventures

All of the above-listed projects add value to the university and College Park but do not have clear funding sources. It is no longer a practical strategy to look to the State of Maryland for additional appropriations or to seek to create more revenue by increasing student tuition and fees. Reallocating existing resources is also untenable, as it would negatively impact operations. Pooling small fund balances held in thousands of individual accounts (many of which have been inactive for the past five years) allows the university to make strategic, large investments that benefit the whole campus. The fund sweep also addresses concerns voiced by the state about the size of the system's accumulated fund balance, which currently exceeds the amount held within the state's rainy-day fund. Large, state-supported fund balances increase our risk of base budget cuts. Over 80% of the current fund sweep was in state supported funds. Our decision to sweep yielded significant progress toward reducing the risk of receiving a base budget reduction related to our fund balance.

The dynamic growth that you have helped to foster on campus results in increased need for new, significant investments each year. Fund balance reversions provide a continuing funding mechanism for meeting these needs.

In addition to the fund balance sweep, the budget "rebasings" initiative currently underway involves increased funding for base needs in each division. "Rebasing" also reduces the need to generate and hold reserves to maintain current core operations. Additional information about "rebasings" will be provided during the fall semester.

You received this email because you are subscribed to the President, Vice President, Deans, Directors and Department Chairs (PVPDDD) mailing list. If you would like to unsubscribe from this list, simply send an email to listserv@listserv.umd.edu with the message signoff PVPDDD in the body.

The University of Maryland Student Government Association

Testimony for SB895

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, Tuesday, March 9, 2021

USM - Student Fees - Review and Retention

POSITION: FAVORABLE

My name is Ben Baitman and I am the Director of Government Affairs for the Student Government Association at the University of Maryland, College Park. Thank you to Chair Pinsky, Vice-chair Kagan, and all the members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee for the opportunity to share our thoughts on this important bill, and to Senator Rosapepe for sponsoring the legislation, which will improve transparency in how University System of Maryland schools spend student fee revenues. It is intended to prevent further violations of USM policy regarding student fees, as occurred at the College Park campus and which I will explain throughout my testimony.

The University System of Maryland's Board of Regents defines student fees in two ways:

- Mandatory fees, which are charged to all students and should "provide revenue for the support of operations that are available and for use of the entire student body;" and
- Non-mandatory fees, which are charged to subsets of students enrolled in certain programs or majors that carry additional expenses, such as dining for dorm residents or engineering students.

These fees are charged for specific reasons, and with specific intentions for how they are ultimately spent by the departments or units that requested them.

In 2019, the University of Maryland, College Park's state funding was reduced by nearly \$4 million for fiscal year 2020. This occurred at the same time that the University adopted a new budget model, which allowed the University more flexibility in distributing funds across campus units and departments. In May of 2019, senior University administrators announced that 5% of all campus fund balances would be moved into a "campus initiatives" account, which could be spent at the sole discretion of the chief financial officer. This communication, along with other documents that I will reference later on, are included in my written testimony in your packets.

However, this fund sweep, also known as a reversion, collected nearly \$23 million. This included over \$3.5 million from accounts that are funded either in part or in full by student fees, including the student union, campus housing, and the campus recreation facilities. In many cases, 80-100% of collected funds were revenues derived from student fees. As a result, many of these departments had to postpone renovations and delay services; some departments were in fact concerned that they would have to request an increase to their student fee in order to make up lost revenues. Department directors have expressed concerns that the reversion sets a precedent for the University to use student fees in offsetting losses from other revenue sources. Again, I refer you to my written testimony for a detailed breakdown of departmental losses.

In October of 2019, another email from University administrators noted what projects and initiatives were financed by the discretionary fund. These included administrative research costs, stormwater management improvements, and capital expenditures such as a new roof for the Biology-Psychology building, HVAC for the HJ Patterson building, construction of the new Cole Field House sports research center, and economic development in the greater College Park area.

These are all important priorities for the University and provide a benefit to our community and our standing as an institution of higher education. However, they are not projects that student fee revenues should be spent on. It would be quite a stretch to claim that the projects and initiatives financed by this fund are accessible and available to the students who paid the fees. Nowhere close to all students will benefit from the Cole Field House athletic complex, and students who paid \$45 for the Performing Arts & Cultural Center fee should expect that it goes to that purpose, not something else.

The fund sweep resulted in millions of dollars in student fee revenues being directed to projects for which the money was not approved and which are not available to the student body. This inappropriate siphoning of funding meant to serve students in specific ways violates the fee-setting process, USM policy, and prevents students from receiving the services that they pay for. Student fees are approved, paid, and collected for specific department operations and services that are accessible and available to the students who paid the fees. Construction projects, administrative costs, and other initiatives should not be prioritized at the detriment of the services that students were told that they were charged for.

This bill requires that student fees be spent in the way that they were intended to be spent when the fee was originally requested. We believe that this is a common sense measure. We also understand that the system's institutions have complicated fiscal frameworks and are in an impossibly difficult financial situation as a result of the pandemic. In response to this, the bill allows institutions to spend student fee revenues in a manner beyond the intended purpose of the fee, as long as the institution's student fee review committee reviews the exception. This provision should ease any concerns that administrators across the system have about controlling their institution's finances. While this bill deals with financial and procedural concerns, the core issue is one of transparency, and I believe that is something that all members of the USM community should appreciate.

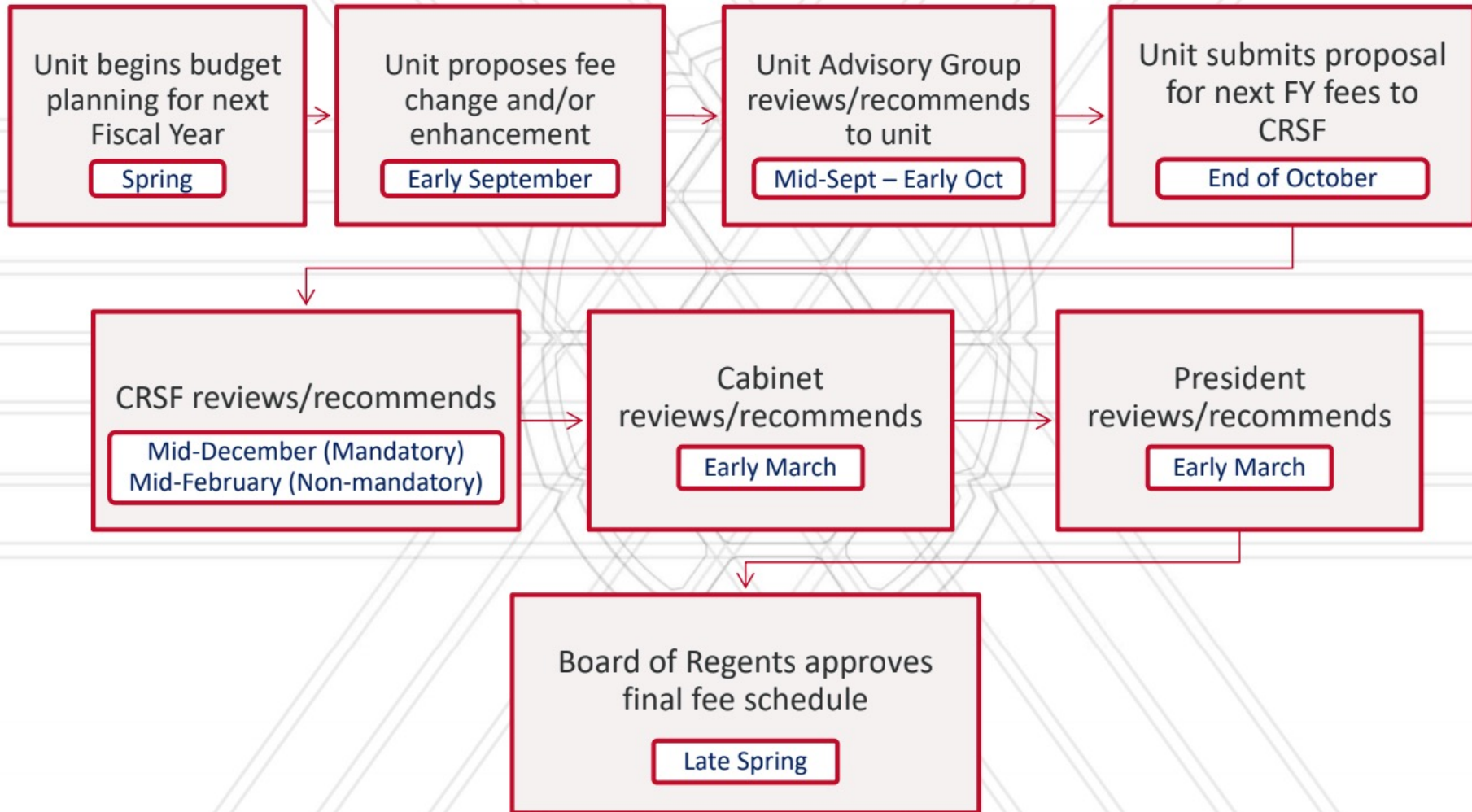
Ladies and gentlemen, I urge you to give a favorable report on SB895. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Ben Baitman, *Director of Government Affairs*

Dan Alpert, *Student Body President*

Fee Change/Enhancement Process



VIII-2.50 - POLICY ON STUDENT TUITION, FEES, AND CHARGES

(Approved by the Board of Regents, June 21, 1990; amended June 22, 2012; amended June 22, 2018)

I. Tuition and Mandatory Fees

1. The Chancellor, following consultation with the Presidents and the Board, shall propose guidelines for tuition and mandatory fees.
2. As part of the formulation of the annual operating budget request, each President shall recommend tuition and fees within the established guidelines.
3. Tuition and mandatory fees, subject to the approval of the Board, shall be included in the detailed annual operating budget for the University System of Maryland submitted by the Chancellor to the State Department of Budget and Management.

4. Mandatory Fees

- i. General Definition: Mandatory fees are those fees that are charged and applicable to all undergraduate and/or graduate students at an institution. (Many times the fees are pro-rated based on part-time enrollment status.)

These fees provide revenue for the support of operations that are available and for use of the entire student body. These operations are not funded entirely by either tuition revenue or state funds. Some examples of mandatory fees include: athletic, recreation center, shuttle bus, sustainability, student union operating, and student activities.

- ii. Student Consultation: In the interest of giving the Board as much information as possible to make the best and most transparent decision regarding student fee schedules, each campus will ensure that an advisory committee—or other appropriate committee(s) involved in the processes of setting student fees—is established and is comprised of appropriate numbers of students and stakeholders representing each area supported by a student fee.
 - The advisory or similar committee(s) will be consulted prior to the establishment or change of student fees during the determination process.
 - The process by which these advisory committees are involved in the determination of student fees will be submitted to the Board of Regents along with the proposed fee schedule.

II. Room, Board, and Student Parking Charges.

1. Each President shall submit proposed annual room, board, and student parking charges to the Chancellor according to a timetable and instructions recommended by the Chancellor and established by the Board.
2. The Chancellor, following consultation with the Presidents, shall present the proposed charges to the Finance Committee for recommendation to the Board.
3. Room charges include room, dormitory, and apartment charges for all university residence hall facilities based on a standard academic year rate.
4. Board charges include charges based on a standard academic year rate.

III. Non-Mandatory Fees

1. General definition: Within the undergraduate and/or graduate student population, subsets of students may be enrolled in or engaged with specific programs/ course study/ activities etc. that create or carry an additional expense. When this occurs, a department may seek funding to help offset these expenditures via a programmatic fee. While understanding that the subset of affected students is required to pay this fee, the fee is not mandatory to the entire undergraduate and/or graduate student population. This type of fee has been categorized as a *non-mandatory fee*, to distinguish it from the mandatory fees covered in section I.
2. Each President may establish fees and charges not included in sections I and II, subject to the provisions in the following paragraphs.
3. The Chancellor may submit to the Finance Committee for recommendation to the Board fees and charges that may significantly affect student costs, or may be considered for consistency among the institutions, or fees that may substantially differ among the institutions.
4. Student Consultation: Each campus will ensure that an advisory committee—or other appropriate committee(s) involved in the processes of setting student fees—is established and is comprised of appropriate numbers of students and stakeholders representing each area supported by a student fee.
 - The advisory or similar committee(s) will be consulted prior to the establishment of any non-mandatory student fee during the determination process.
 - The process by which these advisory committees are involved in the establishment of the non-mandatory student fees shall be reported on annually and submitted by the president to the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance by June 30.

MGA Testimony - Student Fee Bill.pdf

Uploaded by: Berry, Emily

Position: FAV

The University of Maryland Residence Hall Association

Testimony for SB895

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, Tuesday, Mar. 9, 2021

University System of Maryland - Student Fees - Review and Retention

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Thank you to Chair Pinsky and the committee for considering this legislation. My name is Emily Berry and I am the president of the Residence Hall Association (RHA), which represents the voice of all on-campus students at the University of Maryland. After having been deeply involved in the discussion of student fees for over two years in this role, I strongly support SB895 and its implications for increasing transparency and preventing future negative effects on departments and the student body.

I have held an RHA seat on several fee advisory committees at the University of Maryland. However, I did not become aware of the reversion until October 17th, 4 months after a memorandum was sent to all deans and budget officers informing them 5% of their fund balances would be instead used by the university for projects that were not mentioned or approved in any fee proposals. In the following months, discussions with directors in and outside of the Committee for the Review of Student Fees (CRSF) revealed how much this loss impacted their plans to serve students -- we heard many times that if this budget loss continues then departments will have to take on debt and halt projects crucial to the well-being of the student body.

RHA students are especially involved in the review of the proposed housing, dining, and parking permit fees, and thus know how important transparency and communication -- two priorities that were abandoned during the reversion -- are to ensuring fair costs and success of our departments. We spend weeks diligently reviewing each fee and the projects the funds will be used towards, including crucial residence hall renovations, increased dining accommodations, and increasing fund balances in case of emergency. The reversion meant that instead of what they were approved for, these funds were taken for alternative projects, harming the ability of these departments to serve students. Resident Life and Residential Facilities had to defer the renovations of two halls, having a significant impact on their operations and the strategic housing plan that exists to expand housing opportunities and quality. Dining and Transportation also indicated uncertainty about the negative impact future fund losses could have. As a representative of on-campus students, leaving this issue unresolved greatly concerns me.

On March 3, 2020, the RHA senate body voted unanimously on behalf of the resident student body to condemn the university for its reversion and require a discussion of potential future reversion plans in CRSF to protect the integrity of student fees and their intended use. SB894 achieves this goal, ensuring that departments will not have to halt or cut projects due to unanticipated losses. This is not a debate of which projects are most important, but rather a question of whether university stakeholders deserve to have a voice in the way fees that are approved for certain purposes are ultimately spent. If the University of Maryland is able to continue taking funds for alternative purposes with zero transparency, it will likely have dire consequences on the ability of departments to provide the services that are vital to both on- and off-campus student success and well-being. I strongly urge a favorable vote on SB895.

Sincerely,

Emily Berry

President, UMD Residence Hall Association

FSU Testimony SB895.pdf

Uploaded by: Hancock, Max

Position: FAV

The Frostburg State University Student Government Association
Testimony for SB895
Maryland General Assembly, Tuesday, March 9th, 2021
POSITION: FAVORABLE

My name is Max Hancock and I am a senator in the Student Government at Frostburg State University. I'd first like to thank Chair Pinsky and the committee as a whole for the opportunity to discuss this bill. It is my utmost honor to testify here today, as my constituents and I consider the passage of Senate Bill 895 key for creating transparency and good will across the University System of Maryland's various campuses.

The process by which USM student fees are determined is one complimented by the continuous oversight of the students¹. Whether mandatory or program-specific, University System of Maryland policy dictates that diverse advisory boards be made privy to the financial decisions of the school. This policy theoretically establishes a universal mission of transparency, but that mission isn't actively pursued.

Frostburg State University suffers from the same lack of transparency that inspired students at College Park to create Senate Bill 895. While College Park identified an instance of misspent departmental fees, I want to share my thoughts on a different provision of this bill. Frostburg doesn't have the luxury of student participation in the fees process. System policy mandates a review board that includes students in the fee review process. Allow me to describe my search for this hypothetical review board at Frostburg. First, I asked our director of student activities, who suggested that I reach out to the Vice President of Student Affairs. The Vice President didn't have any information. However, he thought that the board was generally composed of the Student Government executives, so I should ask them. I did so, and got a nice email back from Vice President Thayer saying she didn't know of any such board, but would ask Leon Wyden about it. Vice President of Finance Wyden, despite being perhaps the highest authority on the matter of student fees, is an unknown entity to students, and without systematic change, it seems he will remain that way.

This is not the transparent process Maryland students were promised. Frostburg saw a nearly 20% increase in fees from 2016 to 2019². Students were not consulted directly for this, a travesty for a school that prides itself on being accessible to all. FSU is a low-income community, and we can't endure many more attacks to the well-being of our most vulnerable students.

Senate Bill 895 represents an opportunity to enforce the standards of respect and financial sustainability that recent years have seen neglected. Without this bill's protection, students have no reason to trust the process that demands they surrender their money for unspecified purposes. It is the first step in building a more sustainable future for colleges and the students who sponsor them. Thus, the student body of Frostburg State requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 895, for the good of our education and community.

Sincerely,
Max Hancock
He/Him/His
mhancock0@frostburg.edu

¹ VIII-2.50[11846].pdf

² [Data can be found here](#)

Testimony for SB895 - Ireland Lesley.pdf

Uploaded by: Lesley, Ireland

Position: FAV

Testimony for SB895

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, Tuesday, March 9, 2021

USM - Student Fees - Review and Retention

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Good afternoon, my name is Ireland Lesley and I am the former Student Body President at the University of Maryland. I want to start by thanking Chair Pinsky and the committee for having a hearing on this legislation, which is the result of over two years of work by the UMD Student Government Association. The opinions and experiences stated in this testimony are my own and do not in any way reflect the views of my employer.

Throughout the student fee approval process, students are told time and time again that our role, which is supposed to contribute to shared governance, is only advisory. We are told that our work to best represent the student body is only as valuable as administrators decide. However, what is most frustrating is the total lack of information, clarity, and transparency regarding what exactly the student fee committees are supposed to be advising and approving.

When I found out about the reversion, as explained by Ben Baitman, it was not through notice by campus leadership before they took \$61,000 from the SGA and student organizations or a total of \$3 million from student fee sustained departments. I found out in private meetings with department heads who shared what had taken place months before and how it was going to detrimentally impact their budgets and ultimately, students by having to dramatically increase their fees to continue to provide services.

Only when confronted did campus leadership offer any information about the reversion. I then spent months gaining clarity on who had made the decision and why. I had countless meetings with administrators, where they pointed fingers at each other and in some meetings it emerged that perhaps they should not have taken money from student fees, but that it was too late now. We had meetings with department heads, some who didn't even know the reversion happened, or who shared with us how negatively this would impact their departments.

It was striking to discover that there had not been a comprehensive look or even any questions asked about whether this would ultimately negatively impact student services and raise student fees. It was even more striking that the decision-maker, former-Provost Rankin refused to meet with me or other students on this issue or offer any further explanation about how she had come to this decision.

We still don't know a lot of things about the reversion. We don't know if or when it will happen again, whether student fees and affordability will be taken into account, who makes the decision on which projects will be funded and which will be cut, and a whole list of other questions that further prevent student leaders from being able to make informed decisions during the student fee process.

Ultimately this bill is about transparency. About giving the student fee review committees at each institution full information about where these fees go and how they are used. It's about creating a model of shared governance. Real shared governance. And it's about ensuring students understand the fees and services that they are paying for.

Despite there being plenty of questions around the student fee process and the reversion, there is one thing we do know: this method of budgeting, through a lack of transparency, can only continue to hurt students. That is why this bill is so important and I urge each of you to vote yes.

Sincerely,

Ireland Lesley

University of Maryland, College Park Student Body President 2019-2020

USMSC_Testimony in Support of SB0895.pdf

Uploaded by: Rappeport, Annie

Position: FAV



Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 0895: University System of Maryland - Student Fees - Review and Retention

Written Testimony from the University System of Maryland Student Council
March 9, 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. SB0895 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.

SB0895 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 Senator Rosapepe for sponsoring SB0895 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*