



March 17, 2021

The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: House Bill 0770, Baltimore City Community College – Procurement Authority
Position: Support

Dear Chair Pendergrass:

Baltimore City Community College (BCCC) supports House Bill 0770, which is scheduled to be heard in the Health and Government Operations Committee on March 17, 2021. HB 0770 is directly related to BCCC's ongoing efforts to meet the mandates of the College's Realignment legislation enacted in 2017. House Bill 1595/Senate Bill 1227 of 2017 (codified in Section 16-504 of the Education Article, Maryland Annotated Code) set forth twelve separate institutional Realignment tasks, all of which BCCC vigorously and proactively pursued. One of those tasks was to "... Identify any barriers in State or local law or regulations that impede the ability of the College to operate efficiently and effectively, including procurement and capital construction projects..."

Since 2017 when the Realignment legislation took effect, BCCC engaged in a comprehensive assessment of College operations, personnel, finances, enrollment, student success and many other areas. The operational issue that most consistently arouse as an impediment to efficient internal operations was BCCC's low procurement delegation threshold. As a State agency, BCCC must currently submit any contract with a value of more than fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) for oversight by control agencies and approval by the Board of Public Works. The practical result of this is that relatively modest solicitations in terms of scope and dollar value, such as the purchase of student and staff identification card readers or standard IT equipment for administrative offices, can take as much as a year to complete at BCCC. All other state-funded public colleges in Maryland, and all other community colleges in the state, have independent procurement authority which allows them to act for the benefit of their students much more efficiently and flexibly. HB0770 would increase BCCC's procurement threshold to three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000). While University System of Maryland (USM) schools have a \$1M threshold, BCCC recognizes that our size and needs are different and are therefore requesting a modest threshold increase.

House Bill 0770 follows the precedent of House Bill 1066 of 2004 which granted expanded procurement authority to Morgan State University and Senate Bill 444 of 2006 which accomplished the same goal for St. Mary's College of Maryland. Like those successful bills, HB0770 requires that BCCC adopt procurement policies and procedures that must be approved by three separate oversight bodies: the College's Board of Trustees, the General Assembly's Committee on Administrative, Executive, and Legislative Review (AELR), and the Board of Public Works. The College is committed to pursuing all its procurement solicitations, of whatever size, with the highest standards of professionalism, integrity, and transparency. The new BCCC administration has now developed with the Office of the Attorney General, the College's General Counsel, and Procurement leadership, a contractual review process for the legal, financial and process sufficiency before submission to the various state oversight bodies.

The existing \$50,000 procurement threshold impedes the College's ability to conduct business with vendors by contributing to contract impediments such as time, attractiveness to vendors, and inflation exposure. As an example, the work for one critical financial aid service needed for students, was delayed because the College had to resubmit to the state control bodies a revised contract to include necessary services. On average this process can take 90-120 days. However, in this instance given the time it took for contract approval, financial aid services to students were delayed.

A higher threshold would allow us a buffer for inflation, position the College more competitively by providing a strategic advantage when procuring multi-year agreements, and greatly reducing the time it takes to procure goods and services, allowing the College to focus on academic program delivery. This bill will impact and enable the College to provide a value-added educational experience to students. The staff turnover in other agencies often hinder BCCC's ability to complete capital projects on schedule and/or obtain approval of plans for new facilities on a campus where many key buildings are more than fifty years old. This bill will would enable the College to focus on providing state-of-the-art learning environments.

At a time when Baltimore City Community College is making progress in terms of enrollment and alignment of courses with the high demand occupations in both the workforce and academic spheres, HB 0770 will provide an important operational tool to support the College in its efforts to deliver exceptional and affordable outcomes for its students.

For all these reasons, I respectfully request the Health and Government Operations Committee grant HB 0770 a favorable report. Thank you for your time and attention, and for your support of higher education in Maryland. If you have any questions or require further information, please contact me at 410-693-8878 or at dlmccurdy@bccc.edu.

Sincerely,

Debra L. McCurdy, PhD
President

cc: Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee