



HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
House Bill 255
The Maryland Internship Opportunities Program
February 1, 2022
Favorable

Chair McIntosh, Vice Chair Chang and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts regarding House Bill 255.

The Maryland Internship Opportunities Program builds on the success of the Maryland Technology Internship Program, which fosters and supports internships at technology-based businesses in Maryland.

Technology-based businesses are vital to Maryland's economy but cannot continue to move Maryland forward by themselves. Innovative humanities-based businesses, many of which are technology-enabled, are also critical to a robust economy and the high quality of living enjoyed by Marylanders. The University System of Maryland (USM) itself supports more than 110 new startups each year across a wide range of industries, including those related to the humanities. The USM also nurtures talented students across the visual arts, communications, social work, community health, social justice, and more.

In today's workforce and hiring environment, and tomorrow's future of work, we need all types of skilled employees – technical and non-technical. Many of these roles are found at non-profits and in the public sector, where student internships can lead to hiring, but where robust pipelines for talent may not exist. Vacancies within our own Executive Branch in Maryland for professionals and other roles are one example.

Another important feature of HB 255 is the set aside of 50% of the internships for businesses with fewer than 150 employees. This feature benefits students, small companies, and other employers in Maryland. Students interning at small companies receive unparalleled experiential learning. Small companies greatly benefit from onboarding talented students— and in the event that student is not hired full-time— their skill and value as a potential employee is greatly enhanced for other Maryland employers. Small businesses and startup companies do not always have the resources necessary to support internship programs. These firms often do not have full-time HR personnel, may not be able to offer competitive pay, or possess “brand name” recognition with students. They can, however, be wonderful environments in which student interns can learn, thrive, and grow. Students, in turn, can be vital to the growth of their employer and contribute to the development of an innovation-led economy in Maryland.

The proposed Maryland Internship Opportunities Program also helps contribute to efforts focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion. According to the National Association of Credential Evaluations Services (NACES), race, gender, and the parents' education often determine whether a student can obtain a paid versus unpaid internship –contributing to widening disparities in experience gained and compensation earned. The University of Maryland, Baltimore County has a long history of working with employers to responsibly recruit and retain a diverse pool of candidates and is well-

positioned to expand this effort via the Maryland Opportunities program. Too often, students find a business in the community that can provide excellent experience through an internship, but they must take a position elsewhere that offers better compensation. The Maryland Opportunities program would mean more students get placed in paid internships that can ultimately position them for higher paying jobs later in life.

HB 255, through the creation of the Maryland Internship Opportunities Program, will expand access to experiential learning and internship opportunities for students across the state of Maryland. More importantly, it will also provide a true pathway for our students to employment that will enhance their skill level, value to Maryland employers and ultimately, keep them here— driving a robust and diverse economy in the state of Maryland for generations to come.

For these reasons, I respectfully request your favorable report on HB 255.



About the University System of Maryland

The University System of Maryland (USM)—one system made up of 12 institutions, three regional centers, and a central office—awards 8 out of every 10 bachelor’s degrees in the State of Maryland. The USM is governed by a Board of Regents, comprised of 21 members from diverse professional and personal backgrounds. The chancellor, Dr. Jay Perman, oversees and manages the operations of USM. However, each constituent institution is run by its own president who has authority over that university. Each of USM’s 12 institutions has a distinct and unique approach to the mission of educating students and promoting the economic, intellectual, and cultural growth of its surrounding community. These institutions are located throughout the state, from western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, with the flagship campus in the Washington suburbs. The USM includes Historically Black Colleges and Universities, comprehensive institutions, research universities, and the country’s largest public online institution.

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