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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Sponsor Testimony on HB 1446 – Universities at Shady Grove Regional Higher Education Center – Workforce Development Programs - Funding
March 15, 2022 - House Appropriations Committee**

Good afternoon Chair McIntosh, Vice Chair Chang, and Colleagues.

Thank you for the opportunity to present today on my legislation HB 1446 – Universities at Shady Grove Regional Higher Education Center – Workforce Development Programs – Funding. It’s an honor to testify before you this afternoon.

For those who may not be familiar with the Universities at Shady Grove (USG), it is by far the largest of the University System of Maryland’s (USM) three regional higher education centers – located in Montgomery County.

Nine university partners within the USM provide academic programs at USG, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Their primary focus is serving the most pressing workforce needs of the region, with tailored programs aimed at creating a pipeline of graduates in high-demand industries, such as life sciences, teaching, behavioral health, and IT.

USG’s focus is serving the non-traditional student, including students who are first in their family to go to college, who both work and attend school, who serve as caretakers for family members, and who began their educational path at the local community college.

Why is HB 1446 important and what will it enable USG to do?

HB 1446 would provide \$5 million in targeted funding, in Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025, to enable USG to enhance and expand programs, services, and trainings to create, sustain, and retain a viable workforce. Funding would support technical skill training, career advising, public-private partnerships with local industry leaders, apprenticeships and on-the-job training, research opportunities, and educational initiatives that prepare students for the current and future economy. Students will receive the skill development, employment support, and continuing education programs needed to maximize their job success and career pathway.

Our higher education institutions find themselves at a crossroads as they emerge from the pandemic. Enrollment at many institutions is down, at a time when demand for highly skilled, career-ready talent in the workforce is greater than ever and an increasing number of jobs require four-year degrees or greater. Montgomery County ranks among the highest in the nation for the

number of life sciences companies.ⁱ We continue to be at the forefront of the biotechnology industry, witnessing a growth in life sciences employment by 39% since 2010.ⁱⁱ Maryland is a national leader in cell therapy research and development. These job opportunities require a highly skilled workforce.

At the same time, almost 40% of American employers state they are unable to secure enough skilled workers to meet their needs.ⁱⁱⁱ Nearly 60% of employers complain that potential employees lack the preparation for even entry-level jobs.^{iv} We need a workforce that matches the employment needs of business. USG's workforce development programs can close this "skills gap." Their targeted technical and educational training programs, tailored to the capabilities of their students that matches the employment needs of industry, will create a win-win for Maryland students, businesses, and economy.

I urge the Committee to provide a favorable report for HB 1446.

ⁱ <https://wtop.com/business-finance/2021/04/the-big-business-covid-has-boosted-in-montgomery-county/>

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/education/our-insights/closing-the-skills-gap-creating-workforce-development-programs-that-work-for-everyone>

^{iv} Ibid.