



HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

House Bill 916

Higher Education – Programs for Behavioral Health Professionals in Primary and Secondary Schools – Requirements and Grant Program

March 10, 2022

Favorable with Amendment

Chair McIntosh, Vice Chair Chang and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on House Bill 916. The bill requires public institutions of higher education with behavioral health programs to maximize the number and types of students who may participate. The bill also seeks to establish the Behavioral Health Professionals in Schools Quality and Diversity Grant Program.

The University System of Maryland (USM) is aware that public schools have experienced elevated levels of student and staff mental health challenges. This was true before the onset of the Covid pandemic, but it has become overwhelming as students and staff return to in-person instruction in school buildings and on school grounds. As students, faculty and staff return to in-person learning, the mental health challenges have become a greater burden on every school system. Schools must have the professionals and personnel in place to meet the challenges.

USM institutions have the capacity and capability to train the types of behavioral health professionals needed in our schools. From supporting social emotional wellness in early childhood to interprofessional training on military connected families, the USM houses diverse programs. USM has many programs to prepare school psychologists, school social workers, school counselors and therapists across all mental health professions. Moreover, programs at USM institutions help people re-skill and upskill to transition from one career to another to provide behavioral health services in primary or secondary schools.

House Bill 916 addresses the bottleneck that higher education institutions are currently experiencing. While programs are high quality and accredited, resources are needed to expand high-quality programs to ensure that Maryland's students receive the best services to address their mental health challenges.

The USM urges a favorable report for House Bill 916 with amendments by adding the following to page 3, beginning line 14:

17–503.

(A) THE COMMISSION SHALL ADMINISTER THE PROGRAM IN COLLABORATION WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROFESSIONS BY AWARDING GRANTS:



About the University System of Maryland

The University System of Maryland (USM)—one system made up of twelve institutions, three regional centers, and a central office—awards eight out of every ten bachelor’s degrees in the State of Maryland. The USM is governed by a Board of Regents, comprised of twenty-one 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.