

## **TESTIMONY FOR HEARING ON HB255**

### **Provide context and background about Baltimore Collegetown**

Good afternoon, my name is Kirsten Brinlee and I am the executive director of the Baltimore Collegetown Network, a higher education consortia and non-profit organization that works to attract, engage, and retain students to the region.

I moved to Baltimore in 2012 from Texas and knew very little about my new city and state. Ten years later, one thing I have learned for certain is how important higher education is to the vibrancy and health of Maryland's economy. Our anchor institutions draw incredible talent to the region, and I believe we all play an important role in retaining these college students to invest in our future workforce.

The Baltimore Collegetown Network brings area colleges and universities -- including 120,000 students and \$17 billion in economic activity -- into a consortium that benefits each institution and the region as a whole. We articulate the message that Baltimore is a great college town and create programs that strengthen that claim.

Collegetown began as a grassroots effort in the late 1990s, and received 501c3 status in 2001. Our projects and partnerships attract, engage, and retain students, raise the profile of Baltimore as a college destination, and help colleges share resources. Baltimore Collegetown is funded primarily by member colleges with additional support from area foundations and businesses. It is governed by a board of representatives from each member college, Baltimore City, and Baltimore County, and includes a staff of four people. Collegetown provides an important link between colleges and the community and has a strong record of facilitating successful partnerships and programs over the last 20 years. We are the only organization in the state who coordinates collaborative efforts between public and private colleges and universities, large and small, city and county. Our resources are small and mighty and through collaboration and partnership, we are able to amplify our work including important talent retention efforts.

**Please share any workforce development trends in Baltimore and hiring challenges that you can share**

Baltimore Collegetown is committed to making sure that the Greater Baltimore region remains an attractive destination for college and we are committed to deepening the connections between colleges and universities in the region. Every three years, our organization conducts an attitudes and perceptions study of students in our network. Results from the 2018 survey indicated that two-thirds of our students have had an internship during their college career, but many high-achieving students complete those internships outside the state of Maryland in desirable, technology-driven economies like Northern California and Austin, Texas.

Our organization helps students find local internships through the internship database. Launched over ten years ago, this database is a one-stop-shop on the Baltimore Collegetown website and shares postings to all member institutions Career Centers. This database allows businesses, government agencies, and nonprofits to post local internships in one place and for students to search for their next internship on one site.

It is one of the most highly trafficked pages on our website, averaging over 70,000 views annually. Research on Generation Z indicates current college students value solving social issues and are looking for ways to connect to organizations who are addressing some of the most challenging issues faced in our modern world. Gen Z also is very focused on financial stability. Their interests in being connected to solving pressing social issues and seeking personal financial stability meet when looking for internships.

I'm here today to recommend the creation of the Maryland Internships Opportunity Program, modeled after the successful Maryland Technology Internships Program.

The Maryland Technology Internship Program (MTIP) already connects talented college students with leading tech sector and start-up companies in Maryland by creating a direct pathway from college to internship to future career. Expanding internship programs to include humanities-based businesses reduces barriers toward the program's ultimate goal of keeping the talent we are already training in Maryland. The student survey that Baltimore Collegetown conducts also includes the question, "*How likely are you to stay in Baltimore after you graduate?*" In the 2018 results, only 36% of students responded they were "definitely likely" to stay after graduation,

which indicates there is significant work to be done to shift attitudes of prospective future Marylanders.

We need **direct pathways for all types of businesses** to recruit student interns with strong technical skills in our data-driven, innovation-focused world. Thank you for your continued service to the state. I believe in Maryland's ability to attract the best and brightest and grow the vibrant technology sector -- which includes businesses who innovate, government agencies who stabilize, and nonprofits who close the gaps and address social inequities. Thank you for considering my testimony in favor of House Bill 255.