

POSITION: FAVORABLE

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

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House Bill 443 - Maryland Corps Program - Revisions

Written Testimony Submitted By

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As Director of The Shriver Center at UMBC, I am writing to express my support and enthusiasm for HB443. In my role, I oversee the coordination of a set of engagement initiatives with community organization partners, including Service-Learning & Community Engagement, the Shriver Peacemaker Program, Public Service Scholars Programs, and the Choice Program at UMBC. For more than 30 years, these initiatives have supported the Center's mission to address critical social challenges by bridging campus and community through engaged scholarship and applied learning and to lead meaningful social change through community partnerships.

Maryland Corps, as presented in HB443, focuses on expanding college, career, and civic readiness opportunities for Maryland's young people. It also will expand opportunities for colleges and universities throughout our region to support the engagement of young people in a service year in partnership with community-based/nonprofit organizations, corporations, and government agencies that are already partnering with our campuses. Many higher education institutions already have a solid and effective community service and engagement infrastructure in place that can complement and support the Maryland Corps. For example, the Shriver Center serves as UMBC's community engagement hub, developing authentic partnerships with a variety of organizations and designing and implementing initiatives to meet community-identified needs, including removing barriers to service engagement. To meet these goals, the Shriver Center collaborates with more than 125 regional partners across public, private, and nonprofit sectors (including small, hyperlocal community-based organizations and large-scale employers).

Service-focused centers can also remove financial barriers to ongoing service participation once Maryland Corps participants enroll at a campus. The Shriver Center, for example, has a system in place to provide stipends and scholarships to many students. This academic year, the Center will provide nearly \$100,000 to our Service-Learning & Community Engagement student leaders who coordinate partnerships with community-based organizations and schools and placements for students with these partners. Similarly, the Public Service Scholars Programs provide \$3,500 stipends to 55 students annually to support their experiences with nonprofit and state government agencies across our region.

Higher education institutions and associations such as the Baltimore Collegetown Network, Campus Compact Mid-Atlantic (CCMA), and the Shriver Center Higher Education Consortium at UMBC also offer extensive experience placing AmeriCorps VISTAs at colleges/universities to coordinate college, career,

and civic readiness programs. These established initiatives have a deep understanding of service years, stipends, and education awards and could serve as a pathway from Maryland Corps to higher education and the Maryland workforce. For example, participants who complete their Maryland Corps service year could become AmeriCorps members with Choice, enroll in Choice's courses at UMBC, and eventually become Choice staff members.

HB443 strengthens the vision of Maryland Corps, expanding access to service by eliminating barriers and creating new pathways for young people to our workforce and our institutions of higher education. With existing infrastructure, systems, and a network of connections in place, colleges and universities in our region stand ready to support Maryland Corps. I encourage you to support HB443.

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