



**House Bill 1446 -- *Universities at Shady Grove Regional Higher Education Center -
Workforce Development Programs - Funding*
Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
March 30, 2022
Support**

The Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce (MCCC), the voice of business in Metro Maryland, supports House Bill 1446 -- *Universities at Shady Grove Regional Higher Education Center - Workforce Development Programs - Funding*.

House Bill 1446 requires that if the Universities at Shady Grove (USG) Regional Higher Education Center does not receive funding in the FY2023 operating budget, the Governor shall include in the annual budget bill an appropriation of \$5 million each of fiscal years 2024 and 2025. These funds are provided in addition to USG's existing funding and are to be used to establish or support workforce development programs.

Established in 2000 and one of three University System of Maryland higher education centers, USG offers select degree programs from nine public Maryland universities all at one campus in Montgomery County. USG's innovative approach to higher education creates new career opportunities and improves Maryland's regional workforce by providing highly educated and skilled employees that meet the needs of employers.

MCCC contends that the funding in House Bill 1446 is an initial investment that builds new capacities for USG's workforce efforts. For Montgomery County's economy to grow and prosper, it needs innovative higher education and workforce development assets focused on accessible and affordable education pathways that lead directly to the workforce. MCCC is also supportive of the funding's potential to continue creating education pathways that maintain a focus on those in Montgomery County who are underrepresented in higher education.

MCCC supports House Bill 1446 because it brings additional, more robust talent development programming for small businesses and high demand industries. This is important because MCCC members have identified the attraction and retention of quality employees as their top concern. Higher education institutions like USG seek to close workforce gaps and address labor market issues that have only been exacerbated since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For these reasons, the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce supports House Bill 1446 and respectfully requests a favorable report.

The Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce, on behalf of our nearly 500 members, advocates for growth in business opportunities, strategic investment in infrastructure, and balanced tax reform to advance Metro Maryland as a regional, national, and global location for business success. Established in 1959, MCCC is an independent non-profit membership organization and a proud Montgomery County Green Certified Business.

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