



**HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE**  
**House Bill 552**  
**Economic Development - Build Our Future Grant Pilot Program and Fund**  
**(Innovation Economy Infrastructure Act of 2023)**  
**February 16, 2023**  
**Favorable**

Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to share our position on House Bill 552. The bill establishes the ***Build Our Future Grant Pilot Program*** within the Department of Commerce. The program awards grants to universities and projects that, in collaboration with private industry partners, offer significant economic impact.

As confirmed in a recent report on Maryland Competitiveness, performed in response to a Joint Chairmen's Report from the 2022 General Assembly, "***Maryland needs to be proactive and develop a comprehensive strategy to spur stronger high-tech industry and innovation-led growth, make the needed investment to execute that growth, engage industry and diverse communities, and act quickly to remain competitive with other states in attracting and retaining industry and talent.***"

House Bill 552 could provide much-needed, catalytic capacity to the research engine at the base of innovation-led growth and the training ground for tomorrow's innovative workforce. The tie between research and innovation activity and economic impact is critical. The University System of Maryland (USM) has strengthened its focus on research and research-derived economic benefits, including establishing the USM Office of Research and Economic Development, led by USM's first Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development.

As part of \$1.3 billion in research and development activity annually, the USM performs and operates research facilities throughout the state, many of which are supported by federal funds and other investment from outside the state. Investment from Maryland in the state's infrastructure will provide better leverage to obtain these external funds, many of which require matching commitment. House Bill 552 recognizes the importance of tailored and targeted support for emerging industries and innovation clusters, economic growth and community development. The USM and competing institutions across the country recognize that successful venture creation and innovation-driven economic development requires the right environment or "place" in which to occur.

We are pleased to support House Bill 552 and urge a favorable report.



### **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.

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