



HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE

Senate Bill 376

Higher Education – MPowering Joint Steering Council – Funding

March 26, 2024

Favorable

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang and members of the committee, thank you for allowing the University System of Maryland (USM) the opportunity to offer testimony on Senate Bill 376.

The USM is comprised of twelve distinguished institutions, and three regional centers. We award eight out of every ten bachelor's degrees in the State. Each of University 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 three Historically Black Institutions, comprehensive institutions and research universities, and the country's largest public online institution.

During the summer of 2021, Montgomery County, the University System of Maryland (USM) and Montgomery College signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to create the "Montgomery/Maryland Life Sciences Education and Innovation Partnership" to facilitate collaboration among industry and the academic partners on cutting-edge research. The partnership will allow students from across Maryland to have opportunities to gain work experience and conduct translational research with Montgomery County's industry leaders. It is envisioned that the Montgomery/Maryland Life Sciences Education and Innovation Partnership will guide the future of post-pandemic education, leveraging existing assets to create an economic development powerhouse for Maryland in life and regulatory sciences.

Establishing a physical presence of world-class, postgraduate research programming has been central to this commitment. A structure and physical plant that would be scalable to the future aspects, needs, and opportunities fueled by the life sciences industry. The Partnership is committed to the idea that Maryland remains a premier location for biotech industry advancement. The proposed center of excellence will provide the opportunity for co-location, collaboration, and synergy among industry, academia, Federal and nonprofit research organizations within Montgomery County.

UMB and UMCP, in partnership with the University of Maryland Medical System, Montgomery County, Md., and collaborators at the Universities at Shady Grove and the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, announced a transformative new medical research and academic institute that will use artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality, and other emerging technologies to improve healthcare in Maryland. The new institute will leverage recent advances in AI and computing to create a premier learning health care system that evaluates both de-identified and secure digitized medical health data to diagnose, prevent, and treat diseases in patients.

The University of Maryland Institute for Health Computing is the latest strategic initiative of MPower, which brings together the complementary strengths of UMB and UMCP to strengthen Maryland’s innovation economy, promote interdisciplinary research, and create more educational opportunities for students. The institute will catalyze a clinical data science ecosystem in North Bethesda, Md., and attract Food and Drug Administration and National Institutes of Health investigators; UMB and UMCP faculty, medical bioinformatic educational programs, and students; and industry partners, allowing for the expansion of computational “dry” laboratories, virtual meeting rooms, and classrooms.

The funding proposed by the legislation will allow for additional, permanent resources to support the Institute as it scales up to increase the volume of research conducted and to secure extramural funding, as well as to support other economic impact initiatives including job creation, company formation, and private investment.

For these reasons, the USM urges a Favorable Report on Senate Bill 376.



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