JARED SOLOMON
Legislative District 18
Montgomery County
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DEPUTY SPEAKER PRO TEM
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Appropriations Committee

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_____

House Chair, Joint Audit and
Evaluation Committee

The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 312
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
301-858-3130 · 410-841-3130
800-492-7122 *Ext.* 3130
Fax 301-858-3053 · 410-841-3053
Jared.Solomon@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**HB 334 Favorable Testimony – Higher Education – MPowering Joint
Steering Council- Funding
February 6, 2024**

House Appropriations Committee

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, Colleagues, thank you for the opportunity to present on my bill HB334 to secure dedicated state funding for the University of Maryland-Institute for Health Computing (UM-IHC), a unique collaboration between the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP), the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB), the University of Maryland Medical System (UMMS), Montgomery County, and other important University System of Maryland (USM) Institutions. The UM-IHC will serve as a hub for life science innovation and collaboration located in Montgomery County, connecting federal agencies, startups, and private companies in the field.

During the summer of 2021, Montgomery County, the 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.

Establishing a physical presence of world-class, postgraduate research programming has been central to this commitment. In late 2022, this partnership of UMCP, UMB, UMMS, and Montgomery County, along with collaborators at the Universities at Shady Grove and the University of Maryland, Baltimore County, announced the UM-IHC, 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 UM-IHC provides the opportunity for co-location, collaboration, and synergy among industry, academia, Federal and nonprofit research organizations within Montgomery County and the State of Maryland.

The new institute will leverage recent advances in AI and supercomputing 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. A major challenge of life sciences research today has shifted, from collecting data, to using technology to discover meaningful patterns hidden in huge data sets. Our nation's rapid discovery of a vaccine for COVID-19 during the pandemic was reliant on AI to accelerate advances in the underlying lab research. The UM-IHC will create opportunities to discover new ways to help Marylanders and positively impact human health worldwide.

The new institute incorporates technologies, including the use of machine-learning algorithms, to study emerging diseases and help establish precision patient care to halt disease progression. For example, poorly controlled diabetes, high blood pressure, risk of opioid overdose, and early kidney disease can be identified by trending changes in lab tests in outpatients, allowing targeted interventions to prevent disease progression. Such efforts will yield better diagnoses and treatments tailored to an individual's unique health needs.

The UM-IHC is the latest strategic initiative of MPower, which brings together the complementary strengths of UMB and UMCP to grow Maryland's innovation economy, promote interdisciplinary research, and create more educational opportunities for our students. The institute will catalyze the clinical data science ecosystem in North Bethesda that draws FDA and NIH investigators, UMB and UMCP faculty, medical bioinformatic educational programs and students, and industry partners, allowing 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 UM-IHC as it scales up to increase the volume of research conducted and to secure external funding, as well as to support other economic impact initiatives including job creation, company formation, and private investment. The UM-IHC is not just a good investment for our state's economic growth, but also for the well being of residents across Maryland.

Thank you for your consideration and I urge a favorable report for HB 334.