



Appropriations Committee
House Bill 1244 – Maryland Higher Education Commission – Academic
Program Approval and Institutional Mission Statements – Requirements
February 27, 2024
Favorable

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Chang, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on House Bill 1244.

As Maryland’s oldest HBCU, Bowie State University provides access to affordable, high-demand, academic programs that prepare our students for exciting careers across an array of professions. Our students have access to our many industry partners for special lectures, special events, and opportunities for research and experiential learning. We have a long history of providing innovative programs to meet the state’s workforce needs, especially in areas of shortage like teacher education and nursing.

Our status as an HBCU and the only Maryland HBCU within close proximity to the nation’s Capital, key federal agencies, and military installations creates opportunities and challenges. Bowie State University is a highly sought-after partner for technology and health-related programs, partnering with companies and federal entities, but we also compete with neighboring HBCUs in D.C. and Virginia to create programs that are attractive to the region’s employers. We support HB 1244’s goal to improve the efficiencies and transparency of the academic proposal review process to allow us to compete effectively for partnerships and students in the southern portion of the State, District of Columbia, and Virginia.

We greatly respect the role of the Maryland Higher Education Commission in coordinating the review and approval of new academic programs. We believe that a transparent, collaborative, consistent process will enable institutions to address specific concerns and eliminate possible program duplication early in the process -- during program design and development -- as opposed to having to redesign a program to alleviate issues of concern.

With the ever-changing landscape of higher education, competition must be viewed in a global sense – beyond the borders of Maryland and its contiguous states. Institutions must remain nimble in developing programs that respond to and support emerging technologies, high-need industries, and workforce shortages while continuing to produce a pipeline of graduates to fill the needs of our K-12 schools. In that regard, we are pleased to see emphasis placed on ensuring that MHEC is equipped to offer reliable data on the state’s workforce needs to support decisions around program approval.

Timely review of proposals and collaboration across Maryland’s institutions – public and private – makes for more effective use of resources and greater innovation within and between the state’s higher education network, while benefitting Maryland students who wish to remain in their home state for college.

Thank you to Delegate Smith and members of the workgroup for their efforts to improve the academic program approval process. Bowie State appreciates the opportunity to comment on this important legislation.