



Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Senate Bill 5

**Higher Education - University System of Maryland, Morgan State University, and St. Mary's
College of Maryland - Guaranteed Admissions**

January 24, 2024

Information

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in the form of a letter of information on Senate Bill 5.

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 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. The USM is unusual among systems in the wide range of types of institutions it has as members.

Senate Bill 5 requires all of Maryland's public senior universities to develop policies that allow for the admission of Maryland students ranked in the top 10% of their high school class (assuming rank is known). This bill resembles legislation passed in other states to respond to laws that restricted the use of race in admissions. The USM supports what seems to be the goal of this bill: to ensure that our higher education institutions reach students whose communities have been under-represented in higher education. At this time, we do not yet know what the impact of the SCOTUS decision will be in Maryland. Last week, USM and some of our campuses described for the House Education and Economic Development Subcommittee some of the many efforts our universities are making to reach communities that have been under-represented in higher education. We know such outreach efforts have been impactful in other states.

The USM universities strive to reflect the full diversity of the State and do an excellent job of reflecting the diversity of its college-going population. In addition to three well-regarded Historically Black Institutions in Bowie State University, Coppin State University, and the 1890 Land-Grant institution, the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore, the USM is home to three more Minority-Serving Institutions: the University of Maryland, Baltimore County; the University of Baltimore, which is a Predominantly Black Institution; and the University of Maryland Global Campus. For many Maryland students of color, these institutions are the college of choice. Four more USM campuses have highly diverse undergraduate populations, and all campuses are engaged in proactive outreach to attract students who belong to communities under-represented in higher education. The question is whether the impact of Senate Bill 5

would have unintended consequences for the diversity of our institutions, especially in the unique context of Maryland and its wide range of public institutions. Guaranteed admissions policies have varied across states, as have results. Impacts on student demographics could vary widely for our public campuses.

According to the non-partisan Education Commission of the States, there are currently at least [12 states](#) that guarantee admission to their public universities for certain eligible students. Most of these states are not our competitor states. California has an admissions policy that prioritizes admission to eligible students, but admission is subject to availability, and students are subject to university enrollment limits. Results from these state programs vary, both in terms of overall enrollment impact and demographic composition.

With few exceptions, USM campuses already accept all applicant students in the top 10% of their graduating classes—that is, where rank is known. Maryland high schools have stepped away from ranking students, so this legislation would present logistical challenges for all institutions. For example, UMCP reports through the Common Data Set that only 20% of its applicants submitted their high school rank. That said, 92% of UMCP undergraduates had a 4.0 or higher high school GPA (with the GPA provided by 97% of all applicants). Also, there is evidence to suggest that, in many instances, the racial composition of the top 10% of the state's high schools represents populations that would not enhance the racial composition of Maryland's most competitive institutions. There is also a chance that students guaranteed admission to UMCP based on high school rank might choose the flagship, regardless of other factors and overlooking other institutions that provide them with better scholarship opportunities or other benefits.

It is important for universities to be prepared to serve well the students they admit, and understanding the curriculum and experiences students have had helps determine if the students have the potential to be successful. While it is a common practice for states to adopt common minimum high school course requirements for first-time, first-year students seeking admission at a senior public institution, admission standards are still typically established by individual institutions dependent upon their educational mission and targeted student population. Formulaic measures contrast with holistic reviews.

Guaranteed admission can be distinguished from a direct admission process by which an institution reaches out to students, who are known by various means to be a good fit, to offer them admission without having an application in hand. Some USM institutions have started using targeted direct admission, but the process is too new to provide extensive data on its success. Direct admission serves purposes similar to guaranteed admission.

Senate Bill 5 is an ambitious bill, and we respect that ambition. We want to move toward that more equitable future. We believe that a bill with so much potential impact on our state and its public institutions requires more time to understand the divergent impacts it could have. Additionally, we have concerns about the July 1, 2024 deadline associated with the bill. Admission materials are prepared and distributed over a year in advance of when students enter, and the outreach and communication associated with changes in processes need more lead time.

Thank you for allowing the USM to share this information with you regarding Senate Bill 5.

