



**Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Senate Bill 444**

**Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center - Student Information - United States Census
Bureau**

February 7, 2024

Favorable

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on Senate Bill 444. The bill authorizes, and the University System of Maryland (USM) supports, the governing board of the Maryland Longitudinal Data System (MLDS) Center to have the authority to decide to send student information to the U.S. Census Bureau if it determines that sharing that information is in the best interest of Maryland's citizens and community members.

The University System of Maryland (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 MLDS generates timely and accurate information about student performance and longitudinal progress that can improve the State's education system and guide decision makers at all levels. To accomplish this task, the MLDS collects and organizes individual-level student and workforce data from all levels of education and the State's workforce. MLDS has rigorous protocols for using the data that comes from multiple state agency partners connecting key milestones across education, health and human service.

Currently, the law governing the MLDS Center prohibits MLDS from sending student information beyond Maryland or sharing Maryland student data with external entities. The purpose of this restriction is to protect the privacy of Maryland student data. The MLDS Center also has a rigorous process for considering, evaluating, and approving research requests that come to the Center from individual researchers or research groups.

Senate Bill 444 would revise state law allowing the MLDS Governing Board more flexibility to authorize the Center to send student information outside of Maryland, but it will only restrict this to the US Census Bureau. USM approves of the revision understanding the depth to which the MLDS Governing Board takes its responsibility to protect personal information when evaluating which student data is sent to the US Census Bureau.

Again, the USM urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 444.

