

March 24, 2025

Dear House Appropriations Committee,

My name is Dr. Ryna May, and I am a Professor of Humanities at Howard Community College. I have worked at the college for 25 years, first as an adjunct and as a full-time instructor since 2006. And before I came to work at HCC, I was a student and graduated from HCC with an associate's degree in liberal arts. I have deep roots in this community where I have lived and studied and worked for almost 30 years.

I want to express my gratitude to Senator Guzzone, Senator Fry-Hester, and especially Senator Lam for meeting the moment with the introduction of this bill. I also want to thank the county delegates for this opportunity to support HoCo 1-25/SB 813 with its amendments, and I want to speak to the issue of the need for an anonymous survey outlined in one of the amendments.

HCC needs an anonymous survey, and not so employees can complain. In an [article](#) titled "Five Reasons Your Organization Needs An Anonymous Employee Feedback Program," Claire Schmidt of *Forbes* wrote that "Employee feedback programs only work if all employees are able to voice their concerns, thoughts, and reactions without fear of it having a negative effect on their status or standing at work."

We used to have an anonymous employee survey called Quest - we have years of historical data from this survey to demonstrate how employees feel about their working conditions at HCC. In past years, things have not always been perfect, but previous administrations were not afraid to hear disagreement and criticism. It's long been a part of the college's growth mindset to hear and address feedback. In 2022, the anonymous Quest survey was abandoned in favor of a survey designed in-house which was not only *not anonymous*, but also asked only multiple choice questions with no room for qualitative responses. Employees not only feel unsafe replying to this survey because it requires them to identify themselves, but they also feel the survey does not seek authentic feedback, nor does it solicit direct feedback about senior leadership.

Why don't employees feel safe? The massive turnover at the college in the last 3 years has been well-documented, and while some of those employees left willingly, many of them felt compelled to leave or were terminated by an administrative posture that discourages dissent, disagreement, and perceived disloyalty to an individual or an agenda. Comments that direct dissenting individuals to "find exit signs" do not inspire confidence. In this climate, employees hesitate to say anything at all.

Anonymous surveys increase response rates (ensuring that more voices are heard), help employees feel safe from retaliation, increase employee engagement, and most importantly, giving an anonymous survey shows *that leaders care* what their employees really think. Everyone, including the board of trustees, needs to hear authentic feedback. I know the board has recently written a letter to say that they will explore open comments, recording and posting meetings, and employing (or in this case re-employing) an effective anonymous survey. But we must ask ourselves, if they could do these things (and they absolutely could if they wanted to), **why haven't they?** This further demonstrates the need for this bill and the conditions laid out in the amendments. Our number one goal is to serve students, and employees need to feel secure, valued, and supported to do that effectively. We believe HoCo 1-25/SB 813 with its original amendments can help us start to find our way back. Thank you for your time, for your support of this bill, and for this opportunity to speak.

With great respect,

