

## **HB1462**

March 5th, 2025

Chair Ben Barnes  
Appropriations Committee  
120 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

### **Re: Testimony OPPOSING HB1462 CAMPUS ACT**

Dear Chair Barnes and Members of the House Appropriations Committee,

My name is Mary Ella Jourdak. I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB 1462, the Maryland (CAMPUS) Campus Accountability and Modernization to Protect University Students Act.

From the outside looking in, this bill's general intention to combat discrimination and hate-based violence on college campuses has merit. It is a common sense agreement that most Marylanders have for all students to learn in a safe environment that fosters growth and challenge alongside their peers. However, anything deeper than a surface level exploration of this bill imparts grave concerns that this will weaponize the policing of free speech for college students.

After both supporting and engaging with students conducting on-campus protests within the DMV area over the last several years, as well as my own campus activism in the years before that, there is an overwhelming sense of fear that the students already have in regards to police and their on-campus administration retaliating. While HB 1462 seeks to expand protections for students, the mandated adoption of time, place, and manner policies for expressive conduct would disproportionately restrict marginalized voices. These policies may seem neutral in essence, but would serve to target the students who are advocating for racial justice, human rights, and other causes that are critical of government and/or institutional laws and policies. This right to criticize government actions is one of the most fundamental protections provided by the First Amendment.

By empowering institutions to involve campus security or law enforcement in response to what is vaguely defined as "significant disruptions" on campus, this bill could create a deeply chilling effect on student activism, and would ultimately deter participation in peaceful protests out of fear of retaliation from administration and police.

Efforts to combat intimidation and hate on campus are precious and important, but if they are only delivered while infringing on students' constitutional rights to free speech and assembly, then we are not creating the right environment for our students. Instead of advancing campus safety, HB1462 could inadvertently foster an environment of censorship and repression.

Students deserve policies that protect both their right to free speech and their safety, and it is unfortunate that HB1462 does not seek to do both. As such, I urge the committee to oppose this bill and in doing so, seek an alternative way for a safer, more secure environment for the youth across our state. Thank you for your time, and for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mary Ella Jourdak