

My name is Jill Kries and I am a resident of Centreville, MD. I am providing written testimony in support of House Bill 458, **University of Maryland, College Park Campus-TerpsEXCEED Program-Funding.**

I am a life-long Maryland resident, and this is my first time I have felt compelled to provide testimony. I first became aware of TerpsEXCEED this past fall when my daughter, a sophomore at the University of Maryland, enrolled in an elective course at UMD entitled EDPS311: Peer Mentor Training and Certification. This was taught by Professor Meredith Gramlich, TerpsEXCEED Associate Director and in attendance was Amy D'Agati, Executive Director. The course provided my daughter with the knowledge to become a Peer Mentor to students with intellectual disabilities enrolled at the University of Maryland in the TerpsEXCEED program. In addition to the coursework and classroom lectures, successful completion of this 3-credit course required a minimum of 45 service hours mentoring TerpsEXCEED students. At the end of the semester my daughter earned certification as a Mentor, Level 1 Peer Mentor certified via the College Reading and Learning Association (CRLA) International Peer Educator Training Program.

This semester, my daughter is continuing her involvement with TerpsEXCEED working on earning her CRLA Level 2 certification. In doing so, in addition to weekly seminar sessions she will commit to a minimum of 30 service hours working one on one with a TerpsEXCEED student as well as helping the new batch of student mentors enrolled this semester. Just yesterday, my daughter met up with her TerpsEXCEED student and they attended the 2nd Look Fair on campus at the Stamp Student Union where campus clubs and organizations were on display for students to join. She tutors TerpsEXCEED students, attends classes with them, grabs a meal, etc. The program is incredible. Not only does it provide valuable life skills for the students with intellectual disabilities it is providing incredible opportunities for the student mentors. I can see where participating in this program can be life changing. I can't speak for the families of the TerpsEXCEED students but as a mother I can only imagine the joy and relief and pride that comes with seeing your child succeed. I am experiencing many of those same feelings watching my daughter as she commits herself as a peer mentor.

I believe TerpsEXCEED is benefiting not only the TerpsEXCEED students who are gaining and developing skills, job opportunities, and so much more but also benefiting our society, our communities, our campus and the State of Maryland. The peer mentors of the TerpsEXCEED students will go on to graduate from our incredible and prestigious University of Maryland. Most will go on to have full and successful careers in a full spectrum of areas such as education, health, engineering, law, government, the arts and many other endless career opportunities. With them they will carry the experience they gained as peer mentors, the desire to help, and hopefully the continuing dedication of their resources whether time or money to continue to improve the lives of our Maryland citizens with intellectual disabilities. Please support House Bill 458.