

February 7, 2025

Dear Delegate Wolek,

I am writing with regards to House Bill 458, related to funding for the TerpsEXCEED Program at the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP). This inclusive post-secondary education program provides the opportunity for students with intellectual disabilities to receive a college education. I am currently a senior at UMCP and have been a peer mentor to students in the TerpsEXCEED program for all four years of my undergraduate education. I can say with confidence that being a mentor for TerpsEXCEED and promoting disability inclusion on campus has been the most rewarding and impactful aspect of my college experience.

Through TerpsEXCEED, I have developed genuine relationships with the students and have seen their growth in social settings as well as in their classes and internships. One of the freshman students I supported this past semester came to campus reserved and hesitant to share his interests. He would nervously tell me facts about military planes and his love for Super Smash Bros. As the semester progressed, he opened up, engaged with other students on campus through his classes and Super Smash Bros Club, and landed an internship at the College Park Aviation Museum. Having the opportunity to participate in college with support from TerpsEXCEED allows him as well as others to nurture their passions and achieve their goals.

This bill will not only promote independence and professional development for students with disabilities, but will positively impact those around them by increasing understanding and appreciation of diverse perspectives and the capabilities of people with disabilities to add value to society.

I strongly urge you to consider supporting this bill, which will support the development of this invaluable program and provide increasing opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities to gain all the experiences college offers.

I sincerely appreciate your consideration and am more than happy to answer any further questions you may have about the TerpsEXCEED program and its impact.

Sincerely,

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