



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE DEAN

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February 7, 2025

Dear Members of the Maryland House Appropriations Committee:

I am writing in support of House Bill 458 - University of Maryland, College Park Campus – TerpsEXCEED Program sponsored by Delegates Wolek, Solomon, Forbes, Guyton, and Harris.

As your constituent living in Silver Spring, I am writing today to ask you to support college students with disabilities in Maryland and across the country. Inclusive higher education supports academic growth, social development, independent living, and career advancement for students with disabilities, who have historically not had that opportunity. I am advocating for the Governor to include in the annual budget bill, beginning in fiscal year 2027, the University of Maryland, College Park Campus TerpsEXCEED (EXperiencing College through Education and Employment Discovery) Program to provide educational and employment opportunities to students with intellectual disabilities.

As a professor and Dean of the College of Education, I have seen first-hand how inclusive higher education programs support students and the powerful impact of TerpsEXCEED on the University of Maryland community. TerpsEXCEED offers students valuable learning opportunities, meaningful social engagements, and safe and inclusive environments. The program also provides students with internships and job opportunities on and off campus. This includes goal setting and career planning for each student in the program, increasing the likelihood of employment and financial success post program completion. Perhaps most remarkable is how TerpsEXCEED students' confidence and independence grow throughout the program. Students truly become a part of campus life, engaging with their peers and academic work in ways that excite and inspire their families, new friends, faculty, and campus leaders.

Importantly, TerpsEXCEED also promotes growth, learning, and understanding of individuals with disabilities for students across University of Maryland's campus. TerpsEXCEED trains hundreds of peer mentors in kind problem-solving, relationship building and teamwork development, all skills that lead to outstanding future members of Maryland's workforce. These peer mentors have shared their commitments to supporting and advocating for individuals with disabilities as they begin their professional lives beyond the university. Some have even discovered a passion for special education, growing the number of new teachers in an area of high need across our state.

On behalf of the University of Maryland College of Education, I urge you to work with your congressional colleagues on the Committee to provide institutional support for TerpsEXCEED, that also will support expansion of this programming across Maryland.

The future of our state and nation relies on an educated, skilled, and caring workforce. I am relying on you to do what is right for Maryland.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'K. Griffin', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kimberly A. Griffin
Dean