

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 Laurel, 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 a population of students 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.

On a personal level, I have been in support of this program since it was first introduced to my Introduction to Criminal Justice course in the Fall of 2021. Since then, I have welcomed students from this program into my classroom where they have excitedly learned the course material, interacted with other classmates, and contributed to the classroom environment with their valuable perspectives on important issues. These students have immersed themselves in the college experience in ways that provide insight to all involved in the experience. They are valued members of our university community who enhance the classroom experience for all students. I have been fortunate enough to stay in touch with some of my former students and I can attest to the promise and value of the TerpsEXCEED program.

As the Director of Undergraduate Studies in Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Maryland, I see first-hand how inclusive higher education programs support students to postsecondary career outcomes. TerpsEXCEED, University of Maryland's Inclusive Higher Education Program, offers students valuable learning opportunities, meaningful social engagements, and safe and inclusive environments. TerpsEXCEED also provides students with developing internships and job opportunities on and off campus, gathering supervision feedback, and providing direct employment support. This includes goal setting and career planning for each student in the program, leading to outcomes of employment and financial success to continue after the student graduates. It also 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.

On behalf of the Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Maryland, I urge you to work with your congressional colleagues on the Committee to provide institutional support for TerpsEXCEED, that also will support the 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 cursive script that reads "Justine Madoo".

Justine Madoo, Ph.D.
Director of Undergraduate Studies
Criminology and Criminal Justice
University of Maryland