



UNIVERSITY SYSTEM *of* MARYLAND

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee Senate Bill 82

College Preparatory Programs and College Admissions Applications – Fees - Prohibition January 22, 2025 Unfavorable

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on Senate Bill 82. The bill would make certain college preparatory programs free and prohibits Maryland public institutions of higher education from charging Maryland high school graduates college admission application fees.

The USM is comprised of twelve distinguished institutions, and three regional higher education centers. We award eight out of every ten bachelor's degrees in the State. Each of USM's 12 institutions has a distinct and unique approach to the mission of educating students and promoting the economic, intellectual, and cultural growth of its surrounding community. These institutions are located throughout the state, from Western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, with the flagship campus in the Washington suburbs. The USM includes three Historically Black Institutions, comprehensive and research universities, and the country's largest public online institution.

The USM strategic plan, Vision 2030, has a goal to have USM reflect the full diversity of the state. USM institutions engage in extensive outreach to engage young people from under-resourced communities across the state so they are encouraged to pursue higher education. Once students are admitted, our institutions work hard to provide need-based aid, and over half of all students leave with no debt. The USM has a genuine commitment to access.

The USM appreciates the bill's intention to make college applications affordable for everyone. Indeed, USM institutions all have a fee waiver process so low-income students do not have to pay for our college applications. Those that participate in the Common Application also use its fee waiver process. High school counselors and community-based organizations are familiar with this process, and institutions' web pages make the information easy to find. But many tens of thousands of applicants can afford application fees, and the fiscal impact of this bill is prohibitive for our institutions. The University of Maryland, College Park receives about 60,000 college applications, and it alone would see an impact of upwards of \$2 million. This kind of fiscal impact cannot be supported in a year when the USM budget will be cut by over \$100 million dollars. At a time when our institutions are doing their best to keep down costs, this bill would force service cuts or an increase in other costs that could impact all students. Because of this fiscal impact, the USM respectfully opposes this legislation.

Thank you for allowing the USM to share our position on Senate Bill 82.

