

Senate Bill 899
Education - High School Class Rankings and Guaranteed Admissions to Public Senior
Institutions of Higher Education
Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee
February 19, 2025

Letter of Information

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share St. Mary's College of Maryland's analysis of Senate Bill 899. In general, this legislation would require the University System of Maryland, Morgan State University, and St. Mary's College of Maryland to develop and implement admission policies which will guarantee admission, as first-year applicants, for students who graduate from a public or nonpublic Maryland high school in the top 10% of their class, excluding the University of Maryland, College Park, for which a student must graduate in the top 5% of their class to guarantee admission. The legislation also provides a pathway to guaranteed admission for homeschooled students who meet certain criteria.

As the state's designated public honors college, St. Mary's College of Maryland offers a rigorous liberal arts education akin to that offered by our private counterparts. This distinction means that we seek to actively recruit and enroll students who are both academically talented and well prepared to contribute to our diverse community of citizen-scholars. With a relatively small first-year entering class average of 450 students, it is paramount that our holistic admission process considers the full context of an applicant's academic achievements, as well as their personal strengths and interests. Further, as a small institution by design, the College must plan and manage our resources effectively to best serve our already growing student body. If the College's ability to shape admission decisions by incorporating several critical academic and personal factors is inhibited, this could result in class sizes which rapidly exceed and/or deplete our student housing, financial aid, academic support, and classroom space capacity – even if only 1% of Maryland's high school graduate cohorts enrolled at the College through means of guaranteed admission. Equally important, this legislation will significantly and negatively impact the high quality educational experience provided by the close student:faculty interactions we provide in fulfillment of our legislated mission.

We understand that several states have implemented guaranteed admission policies, including California, Texas, Illinois, and Florida. However, it is worth noting that none of these state policies

rely so heavily on a student's class ranking at graduation. In the case of Texas, for example, students must also successfully complete one of several specific programs during high school and earn certain minimum SAT or ACT scores. Further, guaranteed admission at some institutions is only available to students until 75% of spaces designated for in-state residents have been filled. California similarly requires students to successfully complete 15 specific high school units/courses as determined by their Board of Regents and have a 3.0 GPA or better.

St. Mary's College of Maryland remains committed to offering a premier liberal arts education that is both affordable and accessible to a broad spectrum of Maryland students. Thank you for your consideration and continued support of St. Mary's College of Maryland.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tuajuanda C. Jordan'.

Tuajuanda C. Jordan, PhD
President