

# **MD Catholic Conference\_SB 899\_FWA.pdf**

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Position: FWA



**February 19, 2025**

**SB 899**

**Education - High School Class Rankings and Guaranteed Admissions to Public Senior Institutions of Higher Education**

**Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee**

**Position: FAVORABLE w/ Amendments**

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this testimony in support of Senate Bill 899 with amendments. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government. Additionally, we offer this testimony on behalf of the families of more than 50,000 students served by over 150 PreK-12 Catholic schools in Maryland.

Senate Bill 899 would afford high-performing students a guaranteed admissions process to public institutions of higher education. Those school would include all University of Maryland institutions, St. Mary's College and Morgan State University, as well as the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science.

Catholic high schools in Maryland have between a 98% - 100% graduation rate annually, and almost all of those students go on to attend institutions of higher education. Many go out of state, but many stay here at home in Maryland to achieve their higher education dreams and goals. Having a guaranteed admissions process would be hugely advantageous to our students, as well as those in the public school systems.

However, many schools do not actively publish rankings for a variety of reasons. **We respectfully request this committee to consider the following amendment to Section 7-205.2:**

**Page 3, line 31: insert "NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS SHALL NOT BE REQUIRED TO MAKE PUBLICLY AVAILABLE ANY SYSTEM OF CLASS RANKINGS, SHALL CONVEY ON A TRANSCRIPT UPON STUDENT REQUEST A CLASS RANKING FOR ANY STUDENT APPLYING FOR GUARANTEED ADMISSION TO A PUBLIC SENIOR INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION UNDER THIS SECTION."**

The Conference appreciates your consideration, for these reasons, respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 899, with amendments.

# **SB899 Testimony letter of information.pdf**

Uploaded by: Amina DeHarde

Position: INFO

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



Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in the form of a letter of information on Senate Bill 899.

The University of Maryland, College Park (UMD) is proud to be the flagship of the University of Maryland System with a mission to provide excellent teaching, research, and service. UMD educates students and advances knowledge in areas of importance to the State, the nation, and the world. The University's mission commits it to being a preeminent national center for research and for undergraduate education, and the institution of choice for Maryland's undergraduates of exceptional ability and promise. In order to fulfill this mission, UMD has developed an expert application review process which allows the identification and admission of the best possible students to benefit from and contribute to these goals. This process is one which has been carefully developed and fine-tuned over decades and is not taken lightly.

We want to thank the bill sponsor for introducing a bill this year that recognized some of the difficulties presented in last year's legislation. UMD appreciates many of the changes to the bill, but still has several concerns we would like to address as indicated below.

- Guaranteeing admission to the top 5% of Maryland high school graduates has the potential to fill more than 60% of the entering UMD class, while not recognizing the unique mission of the flagship campus. It would, in effect, eliminate our ability to select and shape a class of students that is academically competitive, intellectually, racially, and socially diverse, routinely engaged in leadership experiences, and active outside the classroom.
- It is often the case that several students share a rank within each school. If, for example, a class with 400 graduates has 5 students sharing each rank in the top 5%, this would mean that 100 students would be guaranteed admission instead of the 20 students presumed to be in the top 5%. Extrapolated out over the many high schools in the state of Maryland, it is possible that the entire class of admitted students would comprise students who were guaranteed admission. Individual High Schools would need to be responsible for breaking all ties.
- Given the rise of dual enrollment (which continues to gain popularity throughout the state of Maryland) the calculation of class rank will be exceptionally challenging. While these students are enrolled in college level courses, these courses are not calculated in class rank. As a result, the students who are enrolled in these courses are unlikely to have a class rank which reflects the level of their achievement.

Again, we appreciate the bill sponsor's work to make this a better bill. We remain concerned that a guaranteed admission process is likely to offer an admission guarantee to students who are already advantaged. Class rank is typically determined by weighted grade point averages (GPA) earned by

students who are able to earn extra “weight” through their enrollment in advanced courses like Advanced Placement (AP) and/or International Baccalaureate (IB) classes, and honors courses. This means that a competitive GPA is earned by students who not only do well in their classes, but are also enrolled in as many of these advanced courses as possible.

Data has routinely demonstrated that lower income students are less likely to access AP and IB classes than their wealthier counterparts. According to US News and World report: “...these kinds of rankings can have a negative effect on students' social and emotional health. They have led to increased stress and students putting unhealthy pressure on themselves...Peer competition sometimes leads to grade inflation attempts, as students may choose to enroll in less challenging courses to earn an A.” Teachers currently report there is already pressure from parents to change grades, this will only be exacerbated when the grades influence class rank and GPA ultimately influences college admission.

Thank you for your consideration of this complex issue and we look forward to a continued conversation.

# **SB899\_USM\_INFO.pdf**

Uploaded by: Andy Clark

Position: INFO



# UNIVERSITY SYSTEM *of* MARYLAND

## **Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

### **Senate Bill 899**

### **Education – High School Class Rankings and Guaranteed Admissions to Public Senior Institutions of Higher Education**

**February 19, 2025**

### **Information**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in the form of a letter of information on Senate Bill 899.

The USM is comprised of twelve distinguished institutions and three regional 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 institutions and research universities, and the country's largest public online institution.

This bill requires Maryland high schools to rank their students and then for public senior institutions of higher education to accept students based on that ranking and certain related formulas. This bill closely resembles legislation just now being implemented in Wisconsin and has similarities to guaranteed admissions policies in other states. Some states exclude the flagship from guaranteed admissions or have other limits tied to various criteria. The implementation of the bill is contingent upon the existence of high school rank, which is currently not available from a high number of high schools across the state.

The USM supports what seem to be goals of this bill: to ensure that students know that if they do well in school, they have a place in our public higher education system and to ensure that public higher education institutions reach students whose communities have been under-represented in higher education. This committee will have seen the USM Joint Chairmen's Report submitted this fall that shows for every Maryland high school, public or private, how many applications there were to each USM school, how many students were admitted, and how many enrolled. Total application numbers, acceptance rates, and yield rates for each university with first-time students are also posted on the USM's website. From these data sources, we see that for fall 2024 entry to college, there were over 67,000 Maryland high school applicants to a USM school (excluding UMGC). Most were accepted. The flagship, appropriately, was the most selective but still admitted 35% of applicants, and with comparable acceptance rates across the state. Public data also show the next lowest acceptance rate, 52%, was at Coppin State University. One thing these data suggest is that students are applying where they are a good fit and where they are

likely to be accepted. Our institutions work hard to convey to prospective students what their expectations are for students, both for admission and for success after matriculation.

The USM universities strive to reflect the full diversity of the State. In addition to three well-regarded Historically Black Colleges and Universities, the USM is home to three more Minority-Serving Institutions. For many Maryland students of color, these institutions are the college of choice. But four more USM universities, as well as the Universities at Shady Grove, have highly diverse undergraduate populations, and all campuses are engaged in proactive outreach to attract students who belong to communities under-represented in higher education. The question is whether Senate Bill 899 would have unintended consequences for the diversity of, as well as in, our institutions, especially in the unique context of Maryland and its wide range of public institutions. There is a chance that students guaranteed admission to College Park based on high school rank might choose the flagship, regardless of other factors and overlooking other institutions that provide them with better scholarship opportunities or other benefits. Would a guarantee to the flagship impact the enrollment or the enrollment profile at HBCUs? Or at regional comprehensives, which as the DLS budget analysis for USM noted, are under more enrollment stress in recent years?

It is important for universities to be prepared to serve well the students they admit, and understanding the curriculum and experiences students have had helps determine if the students have the potential to be successful. While it is a common practice for states to adopt common minimum high school course requirements for first-time, first-year students seeking admission at a senior public institution, admission standards are still typically established by individual institutions dependent upon their mission and targeted student population. These requirements are tied to the supports institutions can provide. Each USM institution invests in academic support services targeted to help their unique student populations succeed. Holistic admission processes help institutions determine if they have the appropriate environment for the applicant to succeed. Differences among high school curricula mean that the top 5% or 10% at one high school does not necessarily closely resemble the same rank at another high school. USM universities have commented on the potential cost of implementing additional support services for students guaranteed a spot regardless of their complete academic profile.

There are other financial costs of this bill as well. All institutions would need to adjust their admissions processes, and some have noted the need to hire additional staff to manage additional applications. Those institutions that anticipate greater enrollment, especially the flagship, need to consider additional capacity in terms of residence hall space, faculty, peer mentoring, and other educational costs. The fiscal note from College Park is over \$14 million annually. Institutions that could see less enrollment might have negative financial impacts.

Guaranteed admissions policies have varied across states, as have results. According to the non-partisan Education Commission of the States, and adding in the new Wisconsin law, there are currently [13 states](#) that guarantee admission to their public universities for certain eligible students. Most of these states are not our competitor states. California has an admissions policy that prioritizes admission to eligible students, but admission is subject to availability, and students are subject to university enrollment limits. Results from these state programs vary, both in terms of overall enrollment impact and demographic composition. The Wisconsin flagship,



which is larger than College Park, is just now implementing the Wisconsin law, on which this bill is based. The school is struggling with the capacity increase it will have to make.

It may be worth noting that guaranteed admission for Maryland community college transfer students is expanding across USM. This route both facilitates overall college affordability and ensures that students who are guaranteed admission are ready to succeed at the four-year.

Senate Bill 899 aims to assist students in understanding that college is possible. We want to ensure that students hear that message, however it is delivered. This bill could be impactful, although its impacts may not all be clearly predictable. It will also have financial impacts, some of which are likely to be substantial.

Thank you for allowing the USM to share this information with you regarding Senate Bill 899.



# **SB899 SMCM INFO Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Brandon Engle

Position: INFO

**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

# **SB0899- State Board- LOI.pdf**

Uploaded by: Carey Wright

Position: INFO

TO: Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment

BILL: Senate Bill (HB) 899- Education – High School Class Rankings and Guaranteed Admissions to Public Senior Institutions of Higher Education

DATE: February 19, 2025

POSITION: Information

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The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is pleased to provide this letter of information regarding **Senate Bill (HB) 899- Education – High School Class Rankings and Guaranteed Admissions to Public Senior Institutions of Higher Education.**

### **SB 899 Summary**

SB 899 directs Maryland high schools to determine a class ranking based on cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) for the purpose of determining students in the top 5% and 10% of the graduating class. The bill also outlines criteria for eligibility, including National Merit finalists and home-schooled students meeting specific score requirements. Additionally, it required Maryland Public Senior institutions of higher education to develop a process for accepting students who apply under guaranteed admission policy.

### **MSDE Information**

MSDE supports increasing access to Maryland's Public Universities for Maryland students. To ensure the successful implementation of this initiative, MSDE recognizes the need for careful consideration of several key factors. Institutions of higher education will need to develop comprehensive procedures for processing applications from students who qualify for guaranteed admission. This includes allocating staff to manage the process and verifying student eligibility, including class rank and National Merit Scholarship status. These institutions may also need to modify existing application systems or implement new ones and adjust resource allocations to accommodate the admitted students. The application process will use transcripts from public and nonpublic schools, as well as standardized test results for homeschooled students.

It is important to note that in 2024, there were 60,789 12th graders in Maryland public schools, and an estimated 8,100 students graduated from nonpublic schools. MSDE emphasizes the need for a standard methodology for determining class rankings across all Local Education Agencies (LEAs). Currently, the determination of class rankings and the use of weighted or unweighted GPAs may vary among LEAs. Establishing a consistent, statewide approach or a requirement to use unweighted GPA will be essential to ensure equitable application of the policy.

MSDE is committed to working collaboratively with all stakeholders to achieve the goals of SB 899. We look forward to further collaboration to ensure that the guaranteed admissions program is implemented effectively and provides meaningful opportunities for all Maryland students.

MSDE respectfully requests consideration of these comments as SB 899 is discussed and deliberated. For further information, please contact Dr. Akilah Alleyne at 410-767-0504, or [Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov](mailto:Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov)