

MHEC - Higher Education Goals - HB 762 Senate Tes

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**Maryland Higher Education Commission Testimony
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
House Bill 762 Maryland Higher Education Commission - Higher Education
Goals - Revisions
April 2, 2025
1:00 PM
Favorable**

Good afternoon Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and committee members.
Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of House Bill 762.

I am Dr. Sanjay Rai, Secretary for the Maryland Higher Education Commission.

This bill is a departmental bill for the Maryland Higher Education Commission, which would revise Maryland's 2013 completion goal.

More than a decade ago, Maryland took a bold step in setting a statewide postsecondary attainment goal, recognizing that a highly educated workforce is essential to economic competitiveness. The College and Career Readiness and Completion Act of 2013 established the ambitious target that 55% of Marylanders would hold at least an associate degree by 2025.

Our colleges and universities have risen to the challenge. Today, Maryland boasts 727,000 degree holders, with institutions consistently exceeding their individual attainment targets. This progress is a testament to the strength of our system of postsecondary education and its role in fueling Maryland's economy.

However, we are projected to fall just short of the 55% goal. This is not because of institutional performance, but due to factors beyond higher education's direct control, including migration patterns, employment trends, and workforce retention.

Moreover, even if we hit 55%, it will not fully address Maryland's workforce needs, particularly in critical fields such as nursing, healthcare, cybersecurity, and other high-demand industries.

For the past 10 months, we have worked closely with Maryland's colleges and universities, providing data on their progress toward the 2025 goal and identifying areas for improvement, and engaging stakeholders across the education and workforce sectors.

A major milestone in this process was the inaugural Student Success Summit, where we engaged institutions in discussions about the future of higher education in Maryland. Campus reflection reports, submitted in February, affirm that institutions are ready to move forward with an expanded attainment strategy.

Maryland was a national leader in 2013, setting an ambitious goal to drive postsecondary attainment. Today, we have the opportunity to lead again. We must expand our vision to include the full range of postsecondary credentials that fuels our state's economy.

In closing, I am asking for a favorable report on House Bill 762. Investing in these priorities will ensure that Maryland remains at the forefront of higher education, workforce development, and research-driven economic growth. Thank you.

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SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

House Bill 762

Maryland Higher Education Commission - Higher Education Goals - Revisions

April 2, 2025

Letter of Information

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on House Bill 762 as amended. The bill requires the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) to identify key State goals for postsecondary education to help align higher education with economic development goals and serving the State and its citizens.

The University System of Maryland (USM) is composed 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 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.

Since 2013, the State has been pursuing the goal of 55% of Marylanders having a degree by 2025. Institutions of higher education have exceeded their annual goals to help reach that marker, but in- and out-of-state migration means the State is just shy of that goal. Nonetheless, Maryland's economic strength is clearly tied to the relatively high level of education that its workforce possesses. Having a State degree goal has been important to Maryland and will remain so. The number of degrees USM awards climbed 15% over the past decade—to 42,200+ last year. And 80% of USM undergraduates are Maryland residents. That means many of them stay in Maryland following graduation, contributing their wealth to our economy and their service to our communities.

The USM is fully committed to a robust research agenda and partners willingly with the State in many arenas. Just last year, USM venture support helped launch 182 Maryland startups – 9,000 people working for 200 companies, bringing to market innovations that improve our health, protect the environment, keep Marylanders safe, and connect our world. The USM supports the deletion of language in the original version of House Bill 762 related to research and innovation. Research is driven by federal priorities. Adding reporting and more administrative work alongside the retrenchment and reductions in university research funding at the federal level could prove counterproductive.

However, the fourth goal in the original bill (which is now Goal 3 in the amended House Bill 762) remains too broad and could therefore have considerable unforeseen consequences, financial and otherwise. Again, as the USM suggested in House committee testimony, the following language should be deleted:

“(4) (3) ANY OTHER POLICY THE COMMISSION DETERMINES IS NECESSARY TO ENSURE THAT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE PROVIDE THE GREATEST POSSIBLE BENEFIT TO THE CITIZENS OF THE STATE AND TO FOSTER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT”

There are already processes in place for MHEC, or indeed the legislature, to follow with respect to forming new policy. This goal is both unnecessary and problematic since MHEC has pledged to partner with the segments. The USM looks forward to setting goals together through the State Plan process.

We do not have a static population, so our work cannot guarantee we reach our attainment goal, but segmental degree goals can provide a strong marker of our progress. As we pursue the goal of having a highly educated economy, segments are ready to partner with MHEC to identify these goals, as well as the other goals that our next State Plan for Higher Education will set.

Access and affordability to put a college education within the reach of any Marylander who wants one is USM's most essential mission. But we also understand there are some good jobs that require postsecondary education but not necessarily a bachelor's degree. When we look at education completion including certificates, Maryland educational attainment continues to fare well against competitor states. It makes sense for Maryland to track this metric as well, so long as we do not lose sight of the importance of baccalaureate and graduate degrees in an innovation economy. We therefore suggest a final amendment that would **explicitly** call out a degree goal as well as having a goal about credentials of value.

Thank you for accepting these comments. Should the committee determine that the bill be amended striking the “new” D (3) in the House-amended bill as well as incorporating a degree goal back into the original goal plan, the USM could support the bill.



HB 762 Letter of Information - Senate EEE.pdf

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Letter of Information

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

HB 762 – Higher Education Goals - Revisions

Matt Power, President

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April 2, 2025

On behalf of the member institutions of the Maryland Independent College and University Association (MICUA) and the nearly 55,000 students we serve, I thank you for the opportunity to provide a letter of information on [HB 762 - Maryland Higher Education Commission - Higher Education Goals - Revisions](#).

MICUA institutions have been an integral part of the State of Maryland's degree completion goal since 2013 and agree with MHEC's desire to revisit the 2025 goal. Despite the State's best efforts, we have yet to attain the 55% goal in large part due to the changes in Maryland's demographics and population. As a result, even if the original degree production goals were met, it was likely that the percentage goal would not be met. Maryland is a highly educated State that needs to maintain a highly educated workforce. Maryland ranks 6th in bachelors degree attainment and 3rd in graduate degree attainment. Having a State degree goal is important to Maryland, its residents, and its economy. In 2024, 30% of all degrees conferred by four-year institutions in the State were conferred by MICUA institutions. Additionally, MICUA institutions awarded 47% of the graduate degrees in Maryland.

While degree production is critical, we also acknowledge that there are many excellent jobs in the State that might require some postsecondary education but not necessarily a bachelor's degree. Maryland should both track and set goals for certificates and other credentials that add to the economy and the talent of our workforce. However, it is important that these goals are set separately and not co-mingled with baccalaureate and graduate degrees. MICUA recommends amendments that set one goal for degree completion and a separate goal for credentials of value.

MICUA institutions support research and innovation at all of their campuses, but particularly at our only R1 research university, Johns Hopkins. Their national and international reputation helps them secure more research dollars than any other institution in the country for the 44th consecutive year in 2024. Since so much research is federally or faculty driven, MICUA has concerns about a State research goal that might inhibit research rather than stimulate it. MICUA supports the House deletion of goal #3 until it can be further evaluated and the recent impacts of federal reductions to institutional research is fully understood.

Lastly, the fourth goal (which is now Goal #3 in the amended version of HB 762) seems extremely broad and a "catch all" for any goal or policy. Such a sweeping mandate might result in unintentional consequences in future administrations and should be deleted. Most of the benefits in the fourth goal can be achieved by collaboration between the segments and MHEC in the State Plan process.

Thank you for accepting our letter of information. If the committee determines that the bill be amended striking the original goal #4, MICUA could support the bill as amended.