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March 21, 2025

Chair Pamela Beidle**Vice Chair Antonio Hayes**

Esteemed Members of the Senate Finance Committee
Maryland General Assembly
6 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes, and Esteemed Members of the Senate Finance Committee,,

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 799, which seeks continued funding for the Maryland Innovation Initiative University Institution Partnership Extension Program. As a participant in the 2024 Bobcat Innovation Launch Pad at Frostburg State University, I had the privilege of collaborating with peers from diverse disciplines to develop innovative solutions to real-world challenges. My team's efforts were recognized with a third-place finish, which significantly enhanced my problem-solving skills, communication abilities, and capacity to work effectively under pressure.

The program provided invaluable mentorship through industry professionals and subject matter experts, who guided us through developing commercially viable solutions and delivering impactful presentations. This hands-on experience not only built my confidence but also helped me establish connections that will benefit my future career. The opportunity to develop practical skills while fostering an entrepreneurial mindset is rare in regional universities like Frostburg State, making this program truly unique and impactful.

House Bill 799 is vital to sustaining and expanding this program, which plays a key role in promoting economic growth and technological innovation in rural Western Maryland. The funding will empower future students to gain hands-on experience with real-world problem-solving, innovation, and industry collaboration. By investing in this program, the state can continue fostering entrepreneurial development and commercialization of new technologies, creating lasting economic benefits for the region.

I strongly urge you to support HB 799 to ensure the continued success of the Bobcat Innovation Launch Pad and similar initiatives.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Rommel Christ Gouala

Student, Frostburg State University

Bachelor of Computer Science Candidate