



**THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES**  
**ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401**

**HB 799: Maryland Innovation Initiative University Partnership Program**

Ways and Means Committee

Thursday, February 20th, 2025 | 1:00 PM

Chair Atterbear, Vice Chair Wilkins, and fellow Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

Innovation is the driving force behind our state's economic growth. While innovation funding has long been concentrated in our state's urban areas and larger universities – it's important to acknowledge the next big technology invention or startup idea can come from communities, colleges, and universities that have not historically seen their share of investment in technology innovation.

HB 799 extends funding for the Maryland Innovation Initiative University Partnership Program, which extends opportunities at Bowie State University (BSU) and Frostburg State University (FSU) for technology validation, entrepreneurial development, and industry engagement. This bill makes the investments of an existing pilot program permanent, as the program has seen significant successes.

Each university must pay an annual contribution of \$50,000 to qualify for participation in the extension program, and only these universities are eligible to submit project proposals for funding under the program. To qualify for a grant under the MII University Partnership Program, a project proposal must:

- Support the creation of a new technology-based business in Maryland
- Advance technology toward commercialization of a product or service
- Foster entrepreneurial development at BSU or FSU
- Create an opportunity for meaningful economic impact in the region around BSU or FSU; or
- Foster collaboration between BSU or FSU and an industry partner, including (1) product development with commercialization potential and (2) matching funds provided by the industry partner.

Studies have shown that university-led innovation programs significantly contribute to regional economic growth. This bill ensures that institutions outside the major research corridors can compete for commercialization funding and build stronger ties with industry partners, creating a pipeline for sustainable economic development. Expanding funding for commercialization initiatives at Bowie State and Frostburg State will help bridge the innovation gap, ensuring that every region and community in Maryland can play a role in Maryland's innovation economy.

The amendment includes FY26 to further strengthen this initiative, ensuring that these universities can begin implementing critical projects sooner rather than later. This proactive investment in regional innovation will create sustainable growth opportunities for students, entrepreneurs, and local industries.

**I urge the committee to give a favorable report on HB 799.**