



*Office of the President*

**Morgan State University Testimony  
Dr. David K. Wilson, President**

**Senate Bill 983** (Senator Cory McCray)  
Higher Education – Academic Program Approval - Objections

**April 8, 2026**

**Favorable**

Chair Ben Barnes, Vice Chair Ann Kaiser, and members of the Appropriation Committee. We, at Morgan, thank you for the opportunity to share our position on Senate Bill 983. The summary of the Bill states the following: *Repealing the requirement that a proposed new academic program be a graduate program in order for the Maryland Higher Education Commission or institutions of higher education in the State to file an objection to implementation of the proposed program.*

Good afternoon. I am David K. Wilson, President of Morgan State University. It is my privilege to testify before you today in support of Senate Bill 983 (“SB 983”), which is an important bill to facilitate the State’s compliance with existing federal and State law governing the Maryland public system of higher education. The primary purpose of the bill is to repeal the requirement that a proposed new academic program be a graduate program in order for the Maryland Higher Education Commission (“MHEC”) or certain institutions of higher education to file an objection to implementation of the proposed program. This will ensure that effective processes are in place to properly review and/or object to proposed undergraduate and graduate programs and ensure they comply with federal and State law.

In recent years, the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland held that the State of Maryland continues to maintain and perpetuate a separate and unequal system of higher education that is segregated by race and which violates the constitutional rights of students who attend the State’s four historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), and that a remedy is required. That holding is grounded primarily in the State’s continuing policies and practices of unnecessary program duplication. A Program Approval Process Workgroup (“Workgroup”) was assembled to make recommendations to support Maryland’s compliance with federal and state law. Some of the Workgroup’s recommendations were helpful in facilitating the elimination of unnecessary program duplication, which, the courts have consistently held, was part and parcel to a segregated system of higher education and is a policy and practice that fosters discrimination by race and which perpetuates the inequities of segregation by race.

Part of the progress made was legislation that clarified the distinction between “unreasonable duplication of academic programs” and “unnecessary duplication of academic programs,” and ensured that new, high-demand programs at the State’s HBCUs remain unique to the HBCUs. Unfortunately, some aspects of Maryland’s higher education academic program approval process continue to present serious challenges. The Workgroup made multiple recommendations. For example, it is recommended that the Maryland

Higher Education Commission (“MHEC”) reexamine its statutory and regulatory deadlines for the program approval process to determine if those deadlines need to be updated or streamlined to meet the needs of institutions and students in the State. The Workgroup recommended that MHEC’s processes and procedures be transparent, predictable, and timely.

In this respect, SB 983 will help correct one aspect of the academic program approval process. SB 983 necessarily amends Education Article 11-206.1, which governs the proposal, consideration, and approval of new academic programs. It is important that the State ensure that the analysis and criteria for program approval and objections comply with applicable federal and state law. Currently, it is our understanding that the development of updated regulations has not been completed, and we are concerned that this has resulted in unreasonable and unnecessary program duplication that we believe is not consistent with State and federal law. In addition, since MHEC is responsible for ensuring State compliance with federal and state desegregation mandates, it is important that MHEC conduct the necessary independent analysis, which may inform but is separate and apart from the objection process (which is not the only mechanism for achieving compliance). In addition, transparency is essential, as unreasonable and unnecessary program duplication is less likely to be prevented without making notice to all of an institution’s intent to submit a new proposed program.

All of this will help preserve, strengthen, and enhance a complementary, rather than duplicative, system of higher education, as well as a racially, ethnically, and demographically diverse system of higher education structured to best meet the needs of the State and, most significantly, of the students we serve.

**I strongly urge this Committee to approve SB 983.** Thank you for your consideration. I am happy to entertain any questions you might have at this time. I am also happy to provide you with any further information that you might request.

Respectfully submitted,



David K. Wilson  
President, Morgan State University