



April 1, 2026

The Honorable Ben Barnes  
Chair, Appropriations Committee  
120 Taylor House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Chairman Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and the Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee,

The Maryland Higher Education Commission supports Senate Bill 486, which seeks to expand the Maryland Graduate and Professional Scholarship Program to include students at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES). This legislation recognizes the critical role UMES plays in training the next generation of healthcare and forthcoming veterinary professionals in Maryland.

SB 486 is a vital step toward educational equity by allowing Maryland residents enrolled in UMES's Master of Medical Science in Physician Assistant Studies, Doctor of Pharmacy, Doctor of Physical Therapy, and recently MHEC approved Doctor of Veterinary Medicine programs to access the same financial assistance available to students at other premier Maryland institutions. Under current law, UMES students have received funds for their existing pharmacy program.

As demand for these crucial degrees grows, we must be mindful of the potential impact on available funds if the applicant pool expands significantly. Because we strive to fully allocate all program funding annually to maximize student support, it is important to consider that expanding eligibility may stretch existing resources across a broader student population.

By including these specific high-demand programs offered at UMES, the bill helps address workforce shortages in essential medical and professional fields across the state. It is essential that as we expand eligibility to include the talented students at UMES, we also maintain the financial viability of the program for all participants.

To ensure the continued success of the Maryland Graduate and Professional Scholarship Program, we propose the following amendments:

- **Codifying UMES Eligibility:** Adding the University of Maryland Eastern Shore to the statutory list of eligible institutions. This applies specifically to students enrolled in the

Master of Medical Science in Physician Assistant Studies, Doctor of Pharmacy, Doctor of Physical Therapy, and Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree programs.

- Expanding Commission Authority: Empowering the Commission to designate additional institutions or graduate or professional degree programs for participation in the program. The Commission may make this designation if it determines the program addresses a critical workforce need in the State. Additionally, the program must prepare students for professions in health, public service, or other fields identified by the Commission as important to the State's economic and public health priorities. Finally, the program must be offered by an institution of higher education in the State.

Current law limits scholarship awards to between \$1,000 and \$5,000 per year for up to eight semesters.

We respectfully urge the Committee to adopt these amendments and issue a favorable report on SB 486. Thank you for your leadership and for your commitment to supporting Maryland's graduate students.

Yours in service,



Elena Quiroz-Livanis, Interim Secretary  
Maryland Higher Education Commission

**SB0486 – Redline Draft (MHEC Technical Amendment)**

§18–2601(b)(3) A recipient of a graduate and professional scholarship shall:

**(3) Attend one of the following institutions OR ANOTHER INSTITUTION DESIGNATED BY THE COMMISSION UNDER PARAGRAPH (4) OF THIS SUBSECTION:**

(i) The University of Maryland School of Medicine, Dentistry, Law, Pharmacy, or Social Work;

(ii) The University of Baltimore School of Law;

(iii) The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine;

(iv) Virginia–Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine;

(v) The Meritus School of Osteopathic Medicine;

(vi) THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND EASTERN SHORE ENROLLED IN ONE OF THE FOLLOWING DEGREE PROGRAMS:

1. Master of Medical Science in Physician Assistant Studies;

2. Doctor of Pharmacy;

3. Doctor of Physical Therapy;

4. Doctor of Veterinary Medicine;

(vii) Any institution offering a master's degree in nursing;

(viii) Any institution offering a master's degree in social work;

(ix) Any institution offering a first professional degree in pharmacy.

New Section:

**(4) THE COMMISSION MAY DESIGNATE ADDITIONAL INSTITUTIONS OR GRADUATE OR PROFESSIONAL DEGREE PROGRAMS FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAM IF THE COMMISSION DETERMINES THAT THE PROGRAM:**

**(I) ADDRESSES A CRITICAL WORKFORCE NEED IN THE STATE;**  
**(II) PREPARES STUDENTS FOR PROFESSIONS IN HEALTH, PUBLIC SERVICE, OR**  
**OTHER FIELDS IDENTIFIED BY THE COMMISSION AS IMPORTANT TO THE**  
**STATE'S ECONOMIC AND PUBLIC HEALTH PRIORITIES; AND**  
**(III) IS OFFERED BY AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE STATE.**