



HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
Senate Bill 597
Higher Education - Maryland Artificial Intelligence Partnership
March 31, 2026
Favorable

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer comments on Senate Bill 597. The bill establishes the Maryland Artificial Intelligence (AI) Partnership within the University System of Maryland (USM) to develop a statewide AI strategic plan and coordinate related initiatives. It also requires the partnership, in collaboration with the Maryland Department of Labor, to create Maryland Technology Extension Hubs, and establishes an AI Incubation Lab within USM to help state agencies accelerate the responsible adoption of AI in coordination with the Maryland Department of Information Technology (DoIT).

USM is comprised 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 12 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.

Senate Bill 597 proposes a broad framework to position Maryland as a leader in artificial intelligence by anchoring statewide initiatives within the USM, expanding existing cybersecurity workforce programs to include AI, and creating new structures to support responsible AI adoption in state government. Additional amendments clarified roles, refined institutional responsibilities, and narrowed or conditioned certain new program elements to ensure operational feasibility and appropriate oversight.

Senate Bill 597 formalizes the structure of the Maryland Artificial Intelligence Partnership within USM and more clearly delineates its coordinating function and operational authority. The bill refines the scope and timing of the proposed Artificial Intelligence Incubation Lab. As introduced, the Lab was framed as a standing entity within USM tasked with helping state agencies accelerate AI deployment. The amended bill makes the establishment of the Lab conditional, subject to a memorandum of understanding between the USM and the Department of Budget and Management, allowing key partners to proceed deliberately and limit fiscal or operational exposure until resources, staffing, and agency demand are better defined. The amendments further specify that DoIT's role is advisory and supportive, rather than supervisory, preserving its existing statutory mission while still ensuring coordination across agencies.

Senate Bill 597 creates the Artificial Intelligence Public Service Fellowship, which is established within the USM in alignment with the Maryland State Artificial Intelligence Strategic Plan. The Fellowship is designed to connect students enrolled in public institutions of higher education with state agencies to support and advance AI-related projects that address public sector needs. The program may include a mechanism allowing a state agency, subject to approval by DBM, to repurpose existing funds to support Fellowship activities. In administering the Fellowship, USM is required to consult with DBM and the Governor’s Artificial Intelligence Subcabinet to ensure coordination, fiscal responsibility, and consistency with statewide artificial intelligence priorities. The bill also renames the Cybersecurity Public Service Scholarship to be the Emerging Technology Public Service Scholarship. The purpose of the program is to support students who are pursuing an education in programs that provide core skills directly relevant to cybersecurity or AI.

Maryland is strongly positioned to lead the nation in artificial intelligence research, innovation, and workforce development. Senate Bill 597 reflects that ambition by outlining a solid framework for cross-sector inter-institutional collaboration.

Thank you for allowing the USM to provide these comments in support of Senate Bill 597.

