



HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
House Bill 1125
State Capital Program – Covered Projects – Public Engagement And
Community Outreach Requirements (Community Engagement And
Outreach Act of 2026)
March 11, 2026
Favorable with Amendment

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to provide information regarding House Bill 1125, which establishes new statewide requirements for community engagement and outreach for certain State capital projects. As introduced, House Bill 1125 requires units of state government proposing “covered projects” – including construction, installation, or substantial alteration of physical infrastructure with potential impacts on noise, visibility, environmental conditions, or community character – to prepare a community engagement plan, conduct specified outreach within a one-mile radius, and submit a project-specific report to the Department of Budget and Management (DBM). DBM must then compile these reports and submit an annual summary to the General Assembly beginning December 1, 2027.

The University System of Maryland (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. This bill is important to all USM institutions that accept undergraduate students.

The USM appreciates the bill’s intent to ensure early, meaningful communication with communities affected by major State projects. USM institutions already operate under a comprehensive Board of Regents policy governing community notification and engagement during the planning of campus capital projects. Under USM Board of Regents policy ([VIII-10.40 Policy on Community Notification of Capital Projects](#)) each institution must make reasonable efforts to notify adjoining property owners or occupants – as well as local governments within one mile – when planning a new structure or a substantial exterior modification on USM-owned land. The policy emphasizes that campus facilities must be developed not only to meet the needs of students, faculty, and staff but also to reflect the interests of neighboring communities and municipalities. It further underscores that broad participation is essential, and that institutions are encouraged to build substantive relationships with community and governmental partners throughout the master planning process.

Because USM already adheres to this robust, longstanding notification and engagement framework, we believe the System’s existing requirements align with the objectives of House Bill 1125. For this reason, USM seeks an exemption from the bill’s new statewide process so that institutions may continue operating under the Board of Regents’ established policy. Our policy has proven to be both effective and appropriately tailored to the unique nature of higher education capital planning across our diverse campuses.

We appreciate the General Assembly’s continued interest in strengthening community engagement and welcome the opportunity to provide information to the Committee. We look forward to working with the sponsor as House Bill 1125 moves through the legislative process.

AMENDMENT TO HOUSE BILL 1125
(First Reading File Bill)

On page 2, in line 16, strike “**TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES,**”; in line 20, after “**1.**” insert “**A DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION PROJECT;**

2. A UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND PROJECT;

3.”;

and in lines 21 and 22, strike “**2.**” and “**3.**”, respectively, and substitute “**4.**” and “**5.**”, respectively.

