



**HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**  
**House Bill 231**  
**Higher Education – Guaranteed Access Grant Program - Applicability**  
**February 24, 2026**  
**Favorable**

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to comment on House Bill 231. This bill proposes to delay the decentralization of the Guaranteed Access Grant Program until the 2029-2030 financial aid award year. The University System of Maryland (USM) urges a favorable report on this bill.

The 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.

Delay of the implementation year provides more time for collaborative efforts to shape a clear and well-advised Guaranteed Access Grant program process that better addresses student and State needs and institutional capacity. The Commission's Financial Aid Advisory Council includes representatives from all higher education segments and has a role in working with the State Department of Education on district outreach. That group's charge to provide counsel on matters of policy could be a good vehicle for working towards a new process that helps to award student aid sooner and more predictably.

Thank you for considering our position that the proposed delay is beneficial to our students, our institutions, and to our State's desire to help students receive clear and timely information about their student financial assistance so they may plan their education.



UNIVERSITY SYSTEM  
of MARYLAND

