

CAREER CENTER

University of Maryland, Baltimore County
Math/Psych Building, Room 201
1000 Hilltop Circle, Baltimore, MD 21250

careers.umbc.edu/ p: 410.455.2216

February 22, 2026

Re: Letter of Support for the Walter Sondheim Jr. Public Service Internship Scholarship Program
HB809- Funding (House Appropriations Hearing, Feb. 24 at 1:00 p.m.)

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) Career Center, I write in strong support of the legislation sponsored by Delegate Rosenberg to strengthen and stabilize funding for the Walter Sondheim Jr. Public Service Internship Scholarship Program by requiring a mandated appropriation in the State Budget Bill of no less than 150% of the prior fiscal year's funding.

Maryland faces pivotal workforce development challenges today. Amid widespread federal layoffs and evolving perceptions about careers in public service, it is increasingly important that students understand the value, impact, and sustainability of public sector work. Paid, high-quality internship experiences are essential to counteract misperceptions about job stability and compensation in government and nonprofit sectors. Without this support, talented and diverse students may be deterred from exploring careers that are vital to the health of our state's communities and institutions.

The Walter Sondheim Jr. Public Service Internship Scholarship Program, coordinated through the Maryland's Public Service Scholars Programs, plays a critical role in connecting Maryland students to meaningful, paid public service experiences. These programs provide a comprehensive pathway for students who live or attend college in Maryland to explore, engage with, and ultimately pursue careers in public service through paid summer fellowships and leadership development opportunities.

The programs funded through this scholarship include:

- The Governor's Summer Internship Program (GSIP) offering immersive summer internships in Maryland state government agencies that provide hands-on policy and administrative experience.
- The Walter Sondheim Jr. Maryland Nonprofit Leadership Program (SNLP) placing students in nonprofit organizations to develop leadership and mission-driven skills.
- The Sondheim Public Service Law Fellows Program (LAW) supporting law students working in public interest legal settings.

Across all tracks, these fellowships center paid, full-time placements, structured professional development, mentorship, and seminar series that equip students with deep sector knowledge and professional confidence. Fellows also engage in reflection activities and capstone projects that further sharpen critical thinking, community analysis, and civic leadership skills.



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Importantly, this investment promotes inclusive excellence. Paid internships remove financial barriers that often prevent students — particularly those from low-income, first-generation, or underrepresented backgrounds — from accessing high-impact public service opportunities. Without predictable and adequate funding, the internship pipeline risks shrinking, unintentionally limiting who can afford to participate and diminishing Maryland’s ability to cultivate a diverse public service workforce.

Mandating a funding level that grows year over year will provide necessary stability and predictability for host organizations, students, and educational institutions alike. It will enable expansion of stipends in line with rising living costs and ensure that Maryland remains a leader in workforce development, civic engagement, and public sector career preparation.

The UMBC Career Center proudly supports this legislation and urges the Committee’s favorable consideration. Investing in the next generation of public service professionals not only benefits students, but also strengthens Maryland’s communities, agencies, and nonprofit partners ensuring that public service remains a vibrant and accessible career pathway now and in the future.

Thank you for your consideration and leadership.

Sincerely,

Christine Routzahn
Director, UMBC Career Center
University of Maryland, Baltimore County
On behalf of the UMBC Career Center