

HCCC_SB 597_FAV_APP.pdf

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Position: FAV



March 31, 2026

Legislative Position: Favorable
Senate Bill 597
Higher Education - Maryland Artificial Intelligence Partnership
House Appropriations Committee

Dear Chair Barnes and members of the committee:

Founded in 1969, the Howard Chamber of Commerce is dedicated to helping businesses—from sole proprietors to large international firms—grow and succeed. With the power of 700 members that encompass more than 170,000 employees, the Howard County Chamber is an effective partner with elected officials and advocates for the interests of the county’s business community.

The Howard County Chamber writes in support of SB 597, which would establish an AI University Partnership and create Tech Extension Hubs to connect small businesses with artificial intelligence resources and training.

For many small businesses, artificial intelligence represents a significant opportunity to improve efficiency, customer service, and competitiveness. However, most small businesses lack the internal expertise, time, and financial resources to navigate rapidly evolving AI technologies on their own. The Tech Extension Hubs proposed in SB 597 would provide a practical solution by creating a single point of contact where small businesses can access trusted guidance, training, and connections to universities and industry experts.

The model outlined in the bill, similar to agricultural extension programs, would help bridge the gap between research institutions and the small business community. By partnering with community colleges, local employers, and business organizations, these hubs would make AI education and technical assistance more accessible to small businesses across the state. Providing these services at no cost will be particularly important for small firms that operate with limited budgets but still need to remain competitive in a rapidly changing economy.

Strengthening the connection between Maryland’s universities, workforce training programs, and the private sector will support innovation, workforce development, and long-term economic growth across Maryland. For these reasons we respectfully urge a favorable report on SB 597.

Sincerely,

Kristi Simon
President & CEO
Howard County Chamber of Commerce

SB597_USM_XAPP.pdf

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Position: FAV



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.



SB597_UMBC_Fav.pdf

Uploaded by: Anupam Joshi

Position: FAV

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 597

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kaiser, and Distinguished members of the Committee. It is my pleasure to add my voice to that of my USM colleagues in strong support of Senate Bill 597, which leverages Maryland's unique academic and federal assets to secure a leading position in the AI driven global economy.

As a USM institution that has the Carnegie R1, Community Engaged, and Minority Serving designations, UMBC recognizes the potential of this bill to accelerate innovation, foster economic growth, and secure Maryland's leadership in AI.

The global economy is undergoing a transformation driven by AI. This bill arrives at a critical juncture for the State, creating a "single nexus" to advance AI innovation and workforce readiness. UMBC, along with our sister USM institutions, is ready to lead some of the key initiatives identified in the bill and ensure that a diverse pipeline of talent is AI ready for high-paying roles in the future economy.

UMBC has long served as a critical node in Maryland's cybersecurity and AI ecosystem. Our support for SB 597 is rooted in its existing successful partnerships with state agencies and our role as a major developer of the state's technical workforce. Through the Cybersecurity Institute, the Maryland Institute for Innovative Computing, and programs like MTIP, UMBC already provides the state with proofs-of-concept for the work SB 597 seeks to scale. These include a Cyber range that is used by Community colleges and schools across the state, a Cyber clinic, and work to red-team some AI applications that the state is incubating. This bill will enable a more durable and scalable approach.

One of the most visionary components of this bill is the creation of pilot TechExtension Hubs. These will connect citizens and stakeholders in underserved areas of the state with AI resources UMBC. Small businesses, local governments, and school systems for example can get technical assistance, training for local applications like smart farming or smart manufacturing, and access to AI infrastructure.

Senate President Ferguson recently highlighted that Maryland is uniquely positioned in AI but requires bold investment to maintain its lead. USM can serve as the connective tissue for the state's efforts to turn Maryland's AI potential into long-term economic growth, but it must be accompanied by the fiscal commitment necessary to match the efforts of regional competitors like NY, NJ, and MA. I very respectfully urge the committee to support this bill and provide the resources to realize its vision.

SB597 Testimony.pdf

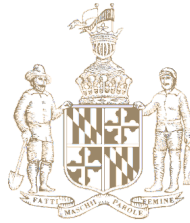
Uploaded by: Katie Fry Hester

Position: FAV

KATIE FRY HESTER
Legislative District 9
Howard and Montgomery Counties

Education, Energy, and
Environment Committee

Chair, Joint Committee on
Cybersecurity, Information Technology
and Biotechnology



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of SB 597 - Higher Education - Maryland Artificial Intelligence Partnership

March 27, 2026

Chair Barnes, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Appropriations Committee:

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 597, which creates the Maryland Artificial Intelligence Partnership within the University System of Maryland to provide a centralized nexus for stakeholders working to advance artificial intelligence initiatives across the State, and establishes key positions and initiatives towards this goal.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is expected to transform every sector of the economy, create new industries, and significantly expand economic output—making AI skill development and workforce readiness essential for Maryland’s future competitiveness and our ability to attract new businesses and investment. Today, our technology sector contributes nearly \$38 billion to Maryland’s economy, and AI-related job postings in the state have grown more than 40 percent in just the past few years.¹²

While Maryland universities are already national leaders in AI research and education – we need a way to focus and leverage this asset for competitive advantage. Maryland currently lacks a centralized hub to coordinate, align, and accelerate AI initiatives. Without that coordination, our universities, students, employees, and agencies risk being unprepared to fully leverage the rapidly evolving opportunities of AI and to position Maryland as a leading destination for AI-driven companies and innovation.

The University of Maryland, College Park is ranked among the top ten universities in the nation for artificial intelligence and recently launched the Artificial Intelligence Interdisciplinary Institute at Maryland. UMBC is ranked among the nation’s most innovative universities and is launching a new master’s program in artificial intelligence, with nearly two-thirds of its doctoral research already focused on AI, cybersecurity, and quantum computing. The University of Maryland, Baltimore is applying AI across medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, and law—from

¹ <https://2025mdmanual.msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/01glance/economy/html/economy.html?utm>

² <https://mdbaynews.com/2026/01/07/ai-jobs-maryland-tech-tax-impact/?utm>

developing the nation's first AI-powered surgical performance center to pioneering AI-driven drug development programs. SB 597 helps ensure these innovations do not remain confined to campuses but instead power economic growth and public sector innovation across Maryland.

Several other states have already taken the initiative to build centralized AI hubs and encourage collaboration with higher education. Mississippi,³ New Jersey,⁴ New York,⁵ and Massachusetts⁶ have established AI nexuses, while many other states, including Delaware, Connecticut,⁷ Utah,⁸ and California⁹ have integrated robust AI programs and partnerships with their universities. Fully realizing AI's potential requires training a workforce that knows how to use it effectively, and that work begins with education, research, and coordinated efforts.

SB 597 addresses this need at multiple levels, beginning with establishing the Maryland Artificial Intelligence Partnership within the University System of Maryland (USM). The Partnership will consult with State agencies, higher education institutions, the Maryland Small Business Development Center, and local workforce development boards. In collaboration with these entities, the Partnership will connect and accelerate AI initiatives; identify and pursue funding opportunities to support Maryland's AI goals; and leverage resources to support an AI-ready workforce and government.

In addition to creating the Maryland Artificial Intelligence Partnership, as amended SB597 includes several other provisions to support Maryland's future in AI:

1. Tasks the Partnership with establishing Maryland Technology Extension Hubs to act as points of contact connecting small businesses and community members with AI resources and facilitating access to AI infrastructure;
2. Establishes the Artificial Intelligence Public Service Fellowship in the USM to match students at State institutions with State agencies to address AI projects;
3. Positions the Center for Equitable Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning Systems at Morgan State University as a statewide resource for research on the secure and ethical use of AI;
4. Lays the groundwork for an Artificial Intelligence Incubation Lab within USM, subject to a memorandum of understanding between USM and DBM, to help state agencies accelerate the responsible use of AI across Maryland; and
5. Requires the Partnership to establish a Strategic Plan including:

³ <https://www.its.ms.gov/services/innovating/AI-Innovation-Hub>

⁴

<https://www.njeda.gov/governor-murphy-princeton-university-microsoft-coreweave-cut-ribbon-on-major-artificial-intelligence-hub/>

⁵ <https://www.empireai.edu/>

⁶ <https://aihub.masstech.org/>

⁷ <https://www.conncoll.edu/library-information-technology/ai-at-conn/>

⁸ <https://rai.utah.edu/>

⁹ <https://insightintoacademia.com/csu-partners-with-tech-leaders-for-ai-expansion/>

- a. Key metrics for the goals of increasing AI literacy, workforce & business development, research, and innovation;
- b. Business plans for the implementations of the Hub and Lab; and
- c. An analysis of scholarship and fellowship needs and opportunities to expand access to AI in the workforce.

With the establishment of a centralized hub and additional targeted programs, Maryland can become a leader in the technologies of the future. Our State is already home to world-class universities, cutting-edge research, and a thriving technology sector. What we need now is a coordinated framework that brings these strengths together—aligning training, research, industry collaboration, and public-sector innovation so that we can fully leverage and effectively promote Maryland as a hub for AI talent and investment. SB 597 is an important first step in building that framework and ensuring that our State and workforce remain competitive, proactive, and AI-ready.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 597.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Fry Hester". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Senator Katie Fry Hester
Howard and Montgomery Counties

XSB0597_MACC_FWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Drew Jabin

Position: FWA

House Appropriations Committee
March 31, 2026

SB 597 – Higher Education - Maryland Artificial Intelligence Partnership

Position: Favorable with Amendments

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC), representing Maryland’s 16 community colleges, supports **SB 597** with amendments to ensure that Maryland’s community colleges are fully integrated into the State’s artificial intelligence and emerging technology workforce strategy. Maryland’s community colleges are already leading the State’s efforts to prepare a skilled workforce in cybersecurity and emerging technologies. Through initiatives such as the Cyber Workforce Accelerator, community colleges are delivering hands-on, industry-aligned training across all 16 institutions, equipping Marylanders with the skills needed to enter and advance in high-demand technology careers. These programs reflect strong partnerships with employers, workforce entities, and State agencies, and are designed to respond quickly to evolving labor market needs.

As artificial intelligence continues to transform industries, the infrastructure and partnerships established through existing cybersecurity and workforce training programs provide a strong foundation for expanding into AI and other emerging technologies. Community colleges are uniquely positioned to scale this work by offering short-term training, industry-recognized credentials, and accessible pathways for students, including working adults and career changers. MACC supports the bill’s goal of strengthening Maryland’s leadership in artificial intelligence through coordinated statewide efforts, including the creation of the Maryland Artificial Intelligence Partnership and regional technology extension hubs. These initiatives present important opportunities to expand workforce development and connect Marylanders to high-demand career pathways.

However, it will be critical to ensure that these efforts build on, and are aligned with, the strong workforce training infrastructure already in place at Maryland’s community colleges. Community colleges are the State’s primary providers of workforce education, and their full integration into the development and implementation of these initiatives will be essential to avoid duplication and maximize the State’s investment.

MACC respectfully requests amendments to strengthen the role of community colleges in the Maryland Artificial Intelligence Partnership and to ensure coordination with existing workforce development programs already operating across the State by explicitly naming community colleges as partners in the bill. With these amendments, SB 597 can strengthen Maryland’s leadership in artificial intelligence while ensuring that community colleges remain central partners in preparing the State’s workforce for the future economy. For these reasons, MACC respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** report with **AMENDMENTS** on **SB 597**.

Please contact Brad Phillips (bphillips@mdacc.org) or Drew Jabin (djabin@mdacc.org) with questions.

Revised_ Senate Bill 597 - DoIT Written Testimony.

Uploaded by: Sara Elalamy

Position: FWA



Wes Moore | Governor
Aruna Miller | Lt. Governor
Katie Savage | Secretary

TO: House Appropriations Committee
FROM: Department of Information Technology
RE: Senate Bill 597 - Higher Education - Maryland Artificial Intelligence Partnership
DATE: March 31, 2026
POSITION: Support with Amendments

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

Dear Chairman Barnes,

The Maryland Department of Information Technology (DoIT) respectfully submits this letter in support with amendments for Senate Bill 597 - Higher Education - Maryland Artificial Intelligence Partnership.

DoIT supports the State's continued exploration of artificial intelligence and values collaboration with Maryland's higher education institutions. The Department appreciates the bill's goal of strengthening Maryland's AI ecosystem and fostering innovation through partnerships with institutions of higher education. With a targeted amendment to ensure coordination with existing State efforts, DoIT believes the bill can better support responsible, efficient, and strategic AI adoption across State agencies.

To strengthen coordination between the proposed Lab and existing State initiatives, DoIT recommends the following amendment:

THE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY **SHALL** PROVIDE POLICY GUIDANCE, AND **MAY** SUPPORT THE INTEGRATION OF THE WORK OF THE LAB INTO STATE AGENCIES, TO THE EXTENT PRACTICABLE.

This amendment would help ensure that the work of the Lab is aligned with statewide policy, existing governance structures, and the practical needs of State agencies, while preserving flexibility for DoIT to provide implementation support where appropriate.

With this amendment, DoIT believes SB 597 could serve as a constructive framework for advancing collaboration between State government and Maryland's higher education institutions while reinforcing coordination with existing State AI efforts.



Wes Moore | Governor
Aruna Miller | Lt. Governor
Katie Savage | Secretary

Thank you for your consideration.

Best,

Katie Savage
Secretary
Department of Information Technology