



## **SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

### **Senate Bill 421**

### **Sickle Cell Disease - Institutions of Higher Education - Policies, Procedures, and Educational Campaigns**

**February 10, 2026**

### **Favorable with Amendment**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on Senate Bill 421. The bill prohibits an institution of higher education from denying access or services to a student based on the student's diagnosis of sickle cell disease (SCD) and requires an institutions to provide reasonable accommodations for students with SCD.

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.

USM institutions are already bound by Title II of the [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#), Title III (for private entities), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, which prohibit disability discrimination and require campuses to furnish reasonable accommodations and auxiliary aids so students can access programs and services. These laws all require reporting mechanisms for violations. USM institutions already operate programs, services, and outreach that align with the goals of Senate Bill 421 – particularly in awareness, education, care pathways, and student privacy. USM policy mirrors these obligations: the [USM Board of Regents Policy VI-1.00](#) prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability and requires compliance with federal and state law, and the System Office maintains written ADA accommodation procedures underscoring confidentiality and the interactive process – policies that guide campus student affairs and disability services operations today.

Centralized disability services are the correct “front door” for students at USM institutions. Federal guidance and best practices emphasize a centralized, professional, confidential process for documentation review, the interactive process, and accommodation determinations—not ad-hoc faculty decision-making. This ensures equitable outcomes and protects student privacy. Confidentiality and limited-need-to-know sharing are core principles. The disability professionals at USM institutions recognize the need to maintain student privacy while ensuring that faculty receive only the information necessary to

implement accommodations; this protects students with conditions like SCD from stigma while assuring access.

For these reasons, we recommend amendments deleting sections 18-511 and 18-512 so that institutions of higher education are not required to follow additional guidelines and prescriptions that are developed by other entities. USM institutions have independent procedures and communication mechanisms because they serve different students and have different community practices. Additional procedures not well-tuned to a campus community could actually impede effective implementation of student assistance.

The USM appreciates the opportunity to provide this information regarding Senate Bill 421.

