



March 11, 2026

Legislative Position: Favorable  
Senate Bill 597  
Higher Education - Maryland Artificial Intelligence Partnership  
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Dear Chair Feldman 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