

SB 486 - Carozza Testimony_FINAL.pdf

Uploaded by: Mary Beth Carozza

Position: FAV

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Education, Energy, and
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Executive Nominations Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 11, 2026

The Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee
SB 486 – Higher Education – Maryland Graduate and Professional Scholarship
Program – Eligible Institutions
Statement of Support by Bill Sponsor Senator Mary Beth Carozza

Thank you Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and my fellow members of the distinguished Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee for this opportunity to present Senate Bill 486 – Higher Education – Maryland Graduate and Professional Scholarship Program – Eligible Institutions and ask for a favorable report.

I want to thank my fellow members of this Committee – Senators Harris and Watson – for cosponsoring this legislation that would expand eligibility for the Maryland Graduate and Professional Scholarship Program to include individuals attending the University of Maryland Eastern Shore enrolled in one of the following degree programs:

1. Master of Medical Science in Physician Assistant Studies;
2. Doctor of Pharmacy;
3. Doctor of Physical Therapy; or
4. Doctor of Veterinary Medicine

The Graduate and Professional Scholarship Program administered by the Maryland Higher Education Commission provides financial assistance to degree-seeking graduate and professional students. A recipient must be a Maryland resident, demonstrate a financial need, and attend a specified graduate and professional school. Under current law, the eligible schools include the University of Maryland, Baltimore Schools of Medicine, Dentistry, Law, Pharmacy, and Social Work; University of Baltimore School of Law; The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine; and the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine. SB 486 would simply expand the eligibility of the scholarship program to the University of Maryland Eastern Shore.

The University of Maryland Eastern Shore is a historically black, land-grant degree and research institution on the Eastern Shore. Graduate students are provided advanced specialized training in needed fields, particularly for rural areas.

I thank you for your kind attention and consideration, and I respectfully request a favorable report on SB 486.

2026 MdAPA SB 486 Senate Side.pdf

Uploaded by: Robyn Elliott

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To: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Bill: Senate Bill 486 - Higher Education - Maryland Graduate and Professional Scholarship Program - Eligible Institutions

Date: March 11, 2026

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Academy of Physician Assistants (MdAPA) strongly supports *Senate Bill 486 - Higher Education - Maryland Graduate and Professional Scholarship Program - Eligible Institutions*. The bill expands the Maryland Graduate and Professional Scholarship Program to include several programs at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, including the physician assistant studies.

Maryland rural communities face a chronic shortage of primary care and specialty providers. On the Eastern Shore, there are communities in every county that have designated as primary care shortage area by the Health Resources and Services Administration.ⁱ Physician assistants are a critical part of addressing the primary care shortage.ⁱⁱ Maryland has already recognized that supporting physician assistants will be a major component of the Rural Health Transformation Grant.ⁱⁱⁱ

SB 486 is an important next step for increasing the number of physician assistants on the Eastern Shore. Clinicians who are educated in their communities are more likely to stay in their communities. We ask for a favorable report. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net.

ⁱ <https://data.hrsa.gov/topics/health-workforce/shortage-areas/hpsa-find>

ⁱⁱ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11802952/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://health.maryland.gov/pophealth/Documents/Rural%20Health/RHTP/MD-Project-Narrative-CMS-RHT-26-001-Cover-Updated-Watermark-%283%29.pdf>

FWA HB 1075_ SB 486-merged.pdf

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Position: FWA



March 11, 2026

The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chair,
Education, Energy, and Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee,

The Maryland Higher Education Commission supports Senate Bill 486, which seeks to expand the Maryland Graduate and Professional Scholarship Program to include students at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES). This legislation recognizes the critical role UMES plays in training the next generation of healthcare and forthcoming veterinary professionals in Maryland.

SB 486 is a vital step toward educational equity by allowing Maryland residents enrolled in UMES's Master of Medical Science in Physician Assistant Studies, Doctor of Pharmacy, Doctor of Physical Therapy, and recently MHEC approved Doctor of Veterinary Medicine programs to access the same financial assistance available to students at other premier Maryland institutions. Under current law, UMES students have received funds for their existing pharmacy program.

As demand for these crucial degrees grows, we must be mindful of the potential impact on available funds if the applicant pool expands significantly. Because we strive to fully allocate all program funding annually to maximize student support, it is important to consider that expanding eligibility may stretch existing resources across a broader student population.

By including these specific high-demand programs offered at UMES, the bill helps address workforce shortages in essential medical and professional fields across the state. It is essential that as we expand eligibility to include the talented students at UMES, we also maintain the financial viability of the program for all participants.

To ensure the continued success of the Maryland Graduate and Professional Scholarship Program, we propose the following amendments:

- **Codifying UMES Eligibility:** Adding the University of Maryland Eastern Shore to the statutory list of eligible institutions. This applies specifically to students enrolled in the

Master of Medical Science in Physician Assistant Studies, Doctor of Pharmacy, Doctor of Physical Therapy, and Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree programs.

- Expanding Commission Authority: Empowering the Commission to designate additional institutions or graduate or professional degree programs for participation in the program. The Commission may make this designation if it determines the program addresses a critical workforce need in the State. Additionally, the program must prepare students for professions in health, public service, or other fields identified by the Commission as important to the State's economic and public health priorities. Finally, the program must be offered by an institution of higher education in the State.

Current law limits scholarship awards to between \$1,000 and \$5,000 per year for up to eight semesters.

We respectfully urge the Committee to adopt these amendments and issue a favorable report on SB 486. Thank you for your leadership and for your commitment to supporting Maryland's graduate students.

Yours in service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "S K Rai". The letters are cursive and somewhat stylized.

Sanjay Rai

SB0486 – Redline Draft (MHEC Technical Amendment)

§18–2601(b)(3) A recipient of a graduate and professional scholarship shall:

(3) Attend one of the following institutions OR ANOTHER INSTITUTION DESIGNATED BY THE COMMISSION UNDER PARAGRAPH (4) OF THIS SUBSECTION:

(i) The University of Maryland School of Medicine, Dentistry, Law, Pharmacy, or Social Work;

(ii) The University of Baltimore School of Law;

(iii) The Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine;

(iv) Virginia–Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine;

(v) The Meritus School of Osteopathic Medicine;

(vi) THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND EASTERN SHORE ENROLLED IN ONE OF THE FOLLOWING DEGREE PROGRAMS:

1. Master of Medical Science in Physician Assistant Studies;

2. Doctor of Pharmacy;

3. Doctor of Physical Therapy;

4. Doctor of Veterinary Medicine;

(vii) Any institution offering a master's degree in nursing;

(viii) Any institution offering a master's degree in social work;

(ix) Any institution offering a first professional degree in pharmacy.

New Section:

(4) THE COMMISSION MAY DESIGNATE ADDITIONAL INSTITUTIONS OR GRADUATE OR PROFESSIONAL DEGREE PROGRAMS FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAM IF THE COMMISSION DETERMINES THAT THE PROGRAM:

(I) ADDRESSES A CRITICAL WORKFORCE NEED IN THE STATE;

(II) PREPARES STUDENTS FOR PROFESSIONS IN HEALTH, PUBLIC

**SERVICE, OR OTHER FIELDS IDENTIFIED BY THE COMMISSION AS
IMPORTANT TO THE STATE'S ECONOMIC AND PUBLIC HEALTH
PRIORITIES; AND
(III) IS OFFERED BY AN INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE
STATE.**