



February 26, 2021

## **SENATE AND HOUSE COMMITTEES DELIBERATE COVID-19 TESTING, TRACING, AND VACCINATION**

On Wednesday in the Senate Finance Committee, the USM provided detailed information for deliberations on Senate Bill 741 (House Bill 836 on Tuesday). The legislation requires the Maryland Department of Health, in collaboration with local health departments of the State, to adopt and implement a plan to respond to the outbreak of COVID-19. It also requires institutions of higher education in the state to adopt and implement COVID-19 testing plans.

The USM explained that when the pandemic first “hit” in the spring of 2020, the University System of Maryland (USM) campuses made a rapid pivot to remote teaching and learning for the remainder of the semester. Then as plans were being developed for the Fall 2020 term, each campus considered responses and decisions that would put the safety of students, staff and faculty first. These decisions included reduced density in campus housing, having those classes in which face to face teaching was critical remain in that format, but continue the hybrid or on-line approach for as many courses as possible.

Another critical part of keeping the campuses safe was the development of testing and tracing programs, with the capability of quarantine and isolation of students as required. These plans required close collaboration with the local health departments and the preparation of living spaces for isolation when necessary. We learned many lessons during the fall semester, that we will outline here along with some of the summary results. The plans, results and proposed plans for spring 2021 can be found at <https://www.usmd.edu/spring2021> Also included is a dashboard for each campus that was updated on a regular basis.

The USM also participates in the COVID 19 Task Force set up by MHEC and we have continued to cooperate closely with the Maryland Department of Health as well as MHEC in sharing our practices with the other segments of higher education in the state. The USM has been collaborating with scientists from Harvard, Wisconsin, California and North Carolina to share experiences and determine ways to adapt to the changing environmental situations. The use of a combination of the more sensitive PCR tests and the quickly obtained results of the rapid antigen tests will provide a clearer picture of the presence of virus on a campus and permit quick and comprehensive response to limit the spread of the virus on the

campus and in the community.

## **DEPARTMENT ASKED TO CREATE HOME ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

On February 19th, in the House Environment and Transportation Committee, the USM testified favorably on House Bill 943. The bill requires the Community Development Administration in the Department of Housing and Community Development to administer a home buyer assistance program that assists current students and recent graduates of public institutions of higher education to receive low-interest mortgages for the purchase of homes near their schools.

Alternately, the “Live Near Your Work (LNYW)” movement is a form of employer assisted housing program to not only support an employee toward buying a home, but also encourage them to live closer to their job. The LNYW program proposal pairs a homeownership grant for down-payment and closing cost assistance in partnership between a municipality and participating employers within the area. The municipality or county will often match contributions made by a participating employer with the primary purpose of encouraging employees (or students or recent graduates in the case of House Bill 943) to live close to their place of employment, study or transit.

House Bill 943 encourages prospective homebuyers to live within walking and/or transit distance to their place of employment or educational study in order to reduce not only household travel and energy costs, but to reduce the impact of long commutes on roads, congestion, and air quality. Nationally, the LNYW program was initially targeted towards the employees of large employers, such as the federal government, major universities and health-hospital campuses in order to have significant impact on commuting levels (since many workers might be eligible for such a program), and to allow employers to offer the program as a tradeoff for employee parking or other commuter benefits.

## **UPDATES ON PREVIOUSLY REPORTED BILLS**

On Thursday in the Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee (EHEA) heard **Senate Bill 405** calling for the addition of a crisis hotline number to the back of **student identification cards**. Senate Bill 405 is the companion to House Bill 466 which requires each institution of higher education to provide the telephone number of Maryland's Helpline on student identification cards. The USM asked that the bill be amended to give USM presidents the discretion to decide which crisis number appears on student identification cards. Also on Thursday in EHEA was discussion of **Senate Bill 886**. The bill requires the Maryland Higher Education Commission to establish notification procedures regarding the denial of **transfer credits**; report the denial to the institution from which the transfer student originates; and submit to MHEC an annual report listing the denials and the reasons for the denials. The USM testified favorable with amendments on both bills.

## **UPCOMING BILL HEARINGS**

**SB0858**

Higher Education – Coppin State University – Funding  
Senator Hayes  
In the Senate - Hearing 3/03 at 1:00 p.m.  
Budget and Taxation

**HB0905 (SB0845)**

Education - Workforce Development Sequence Scholarships – Eligibility  
Delegate Bridges  
In the House - Hearing 3/03 at 1:30 p.m.  
Appropriations

**HB0918**

Higher Education - Maryland Loan Assistance Repayment Program - Underrepresented Teachers  
Delegate Amprey  
In the House - Hearing 3/03 at 1:30 p.m.  
Appropriations

**SB0554 (HB0246)**

Higher Education - Returned Peace Corps Volunteers - In-State Tuition  
Senator Young  
In the Senate - Hearing 3/09 at 1:00 p.m.  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

**HB1172**

Higher Education – Pay It Forward Program and Pay It Forward Fund – Established  
Delegate Hill  
In the House - Hearing 3/09 at 1:30 p.m.  
Appropriations

**HB0850**

Higher Education – Maryland Corps Program Fund – COVID–19 Emergency Funding Priorities  
Delegate Rosenberg  
In the House - Hearing 3/09 at 1:30 p.m.  
Appropriations

**SB0767 (HB0891)**

Higher Education - Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program – Established  
Senator Washington  
In the Senate - Hearing 3/09 at 1:00 p.m.  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

**SB0800 (HB1337)**

Inmate Training and Job Act of 2021  
Senator Patterson  
In the Senate - Hearing 3/09 at 1:00 p.m.

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

**SB0835 (HB0803)**

Facilitating University Transformations by Unifying Reductions in Emissions (FUTURE) Act

Senator Rosapepe

In the Senate - Hearing 3/09 at 1:00 p.m.

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

**SB0845 (HB0905)**

Education – Workforce Development Sequence Scholarships – Eligibility

Senator Benson

In the Senate - Hearing 3/09 at 1:00 p.m.

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

**SB0895**

University System of Maryland - Student Fees - Review and Retention

Senator Rosapepe

In the Senate - Hearing 3/09 at 1:00 p.m.

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

**HB0891 (SB0767)**

Higher Education - Hunger-Free Campus Grant Program – Established

Delegate Davis, D.M.

In the House - Hearing 3/11 at 1:30 p.m.

Appropriations

**HB1337 (SB0800)**

Inmate Training and Job Act of 2021

Delegate Proctor

In the House - Hearing 3/15 at 1:30 p.m.

Judiciary

**HB1208**

Task Force to Study Academic Credit for Prior Learning in Higher Education

Delegate Solomon

In the House - Hearing 3/16 at 1:30 p.m.

Appropriations

**HB1295**

University System of Maryland – Student Fees – Review and Retention

Delegate Ivey

In the House - Hearing 3/16 at 1:30 p.m.

Appropriations

**SB0709 (HB0892)**

Economic Development - Maryland Technology Infrastructure Pilot Program – Establishment  
Senator Edwards  
In the Senate - Hearing 3/16 at 1:00 p.m.  
Finance

**SB0927**

Institutions of Higher Education - Prohibition Against Incentive Payments - Foreign Student  
Exemption  
Senator Pinsky  
In the Senate - First Reading Senate  
Rules