



HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
House Bill 702
Standardized Tests - Prohibition of Use in Student Admissions
February 17, 2021
Dr. Joann Boughman
Senior Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs
Urging an Unfavorable Report

Chair McIntosh, Vice Chair Chang and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts regarding House Bill 702. The bill would prohibit public institutions of higher education, with the exception of the University of Maryland School of Medicine or any other public medical schools in the state, from requiring an applicant to submit a standardized test score as part of the admissions process. The University System of Maryland (USM) urges an unfavorable report on HB702.

For years, USM institutions have engaged in a holistic review of prospective students' admissions files. That process engages the expertise of professional educators whose judgments—based upon consideration of each applicant's credentials measured by **all** admissions criteria—build classes and cohorts that will best complement the existing student body, meet the university's mission objectives, and be successful. Standardized test scores are only one factor in the holistic review. Other factors include grades in academic subjects, written expression of ideas (essay), community service and involvement, academic endeavors outside of the classroom, work experience, progression of performance, extracurricular activities, demonstrated leadership, and special talents or skills.

The University System of Maryland's Board of Regents Policy III-4.00, Policy on Undergraduate Admissions, lists several instances in which prospective, first-year students are required to submit or would benefit from submitting standardized test scores. Those include:

- Freshmen for regular admission
- Freshmen for early admission
- Students from non-accredited/non-approved high schools
- Home-schooled students
- Students with proficiency-based standards, standardized examinations, or equivalency diplomas (i.e., General Educational Development and National External Diploma Program - alternatives to high school diplomas)
- Concurrent enrollment for non-degree, high school students looking to enroll in undergraduate classes concurrently with their enrollment in high school

HB702 would restrict institutions from requiring standardized test scores when, in many instances, test scores help paint the picture of how well a student may do and what kinds of services students may need to be successful.

This legislation would also prohibit schools from requesting the following standardized test scores found in graduate and professional programs:

- Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) – Law School
- Dental Admission Test – Dental School

- Graduate Record Exam (GRE) – Graduate School – masters and doctoral programs including, but not limited to, physical therapy, genetic counseling, physician assistant, and the master of public health (which also requests scores from the LSAT, DAT, Medical College Admission Test, Pharmacy College Admission Test, or Veterinary College Admission Test if an applicant took any of those standardized tests)
- Test of English as a Foreign Language or International English Language Testing Service – Testing English Proficiency
- Official Test of Essential Academic Skills – Nursing
- Miller Analogies Test – Social Work and other graduate programs

Prohibiting the use standardized test for admissions in graduate and professional programs is impractical and problematic. Universities need to maintain independence when deciding if, how, and for which groups standardized test scores should be optional. The Board of Regents has granted exceptions to its Policy on Undergraduate Admissions (III-4.00) when institutions have undergone data analysis and examinations of student success regarding the effects of going test-optional. Presently, students applying to Salisbury University under its test-optional program are exempt from having to submit a standardized test score. The University of Maryland Global Campus is also test-optional. Additionally, the University of Maryland Eastern Shore is currently conducting a Board-approved pilot study using standardized tests as an optional criterion for admission for first-year students whose overall high school minimum grade point average of 3.4. We encourage this informed process. Under the proposed legislation, universities would not be able to require test scores under any circumstances – even if a student showed limited success using other criterion. This would be a mistake.

Standardized test scores are only one of many criteria that are used when evaluating prospective students' applications, and it is not always required. Often, they are used to bolster an applicant's academic profile and chances of admission. Institutions need autonomy and leeway to identify their nuanced approaches to requiring or not requiring standardized test. Furthermore, test scores are often used for more than admissions decisions. Universities use test scores in making decisions about scholarships; the assignment of majors; placement in honors, living learning, or special academic programs; and in the evaluation of student-athletes per the NCAA. In all instances, program coordinators and student services professionals are best equipped to make decisions about when a test score should or should not be required and considered. This legislation would prohibit those professionals from making such informed decisions which could have significant, negative effects on scores of academic programs and majors (for those in undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs), the evaluation of readiness for special programs and scholarships, and the admissions process as a whole.

Therefore, the University System of Maryland urges an unfavorable report on HB702.