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Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Senate Bill 205
University System of Maryland – Board of Regents – Membership
January 24, 2024
Favorable

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on Senate Bill 205. The University System of Maryland (USM) comprises 12 distinguished universities and three regional centers with distinct and unique approaches 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. A range of institutional types complement this geographic diversity. The USM includes land-grant universities, regional universities, and HBCUs, together with universities whose missions focus on online education, professional and graduate education, and environmental education.

The USM Board of Regents (BOR) is a 21-member board whose Regents are appointed by the Governor, the Senate President, and Speaker of the House. Two Regents—the Secretary of Commerce and the Secretary of Agriculture—are ex-officio members and serve at the pleasure of their executive appointment. Additionally, two Regents are currently enrolled USM students.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are among the USM's core values. As such, the USM aspires to reflect Maryland's diversity, even among the citizens who serve on the BOR. Currently, 42 percent of the Regents are minorities. Most of the Regents, about 70 percent of the current Board, attended or currently attend a USM institution for their undergraduate or graduate education.

Senate Bill 205 requires that one member appointed to the USM Board of Regents be a graduate of a historically Black college or university in the state.

The Board's membership has included both HBCU alumni and students. Since 2010, nine Regents have been graduates or students of HBCUs, including Bowie State University; the University of Maryland Eastern Shore; Morgan State University; Cheney University, Clark-Atlanta University; Tougaloo College; Southern University; and Howard University. Two sitting Regents—Regents Gourdine and Leggett—are HBCU alumni.

The USM supports a diverse BOR, including a membership that reflects both the state's diversity and the diversity within our institutions—in fact, most USM universities serve a predominantly minority student population. We believe this to be the goal of Senate Bill 205. Appointment of Regents is the responsibility of the Governor and legislative leadership, and the USM is fortunate

to have state leaders who have appointed alumni and students of HBCUs and of universities across the System.

The USM has also supported amendments to the Board’s membership when the General Assembly passed legislation (SB 719) in 2019 to enhance the governance structure and operations of the Board. This legislation established the requirement that the board’s membership include three individuals, one each with a background in higher education, finance, and diversity and workplace inclusion.

We appreciate the intent of Senate Bill 205 and support this legislation. At the same time, we are mindful of the increasing number of requirements regarding the Board’s composition.

Thank you for allowing the USM to offer this testimony in support of Senate Bill 205.



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Position: UNF

Oppose SB 205

Selecting officials based on race? What about HCBUs that requires some special representation in the BoR? Why is only the black race being singled out?

More importantly, in recent years the current Board of Regents demonstrated absolute lack of interest in the issues that the community had with various college administration and policies. That was clearly demonstrated by the Board's rejection of public comments, having meetings in private, and lack of response to verbal and written requests. The Board preference to assert their own authority and ignore the needs of a broader community.

Assigning special (preferred?) candidates to the BoR will not fix any issues at the Board and will not improve management of the USM. As legislators, please demand investigation into the Board's practices and require accountability for past actions.

Sincerely,
Mark Meyerovich
Gaithersburg, MD