



**Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**  
**Senate Bill 5**  
**Higher Education - Guaranteed Admissions**  
**January 24, 2024**  
**Urging an Unfavorable Report**

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on Senate Bill 5. While we are dedicated to maintaining and increasing both racial and geographic diversity at the University of Maryland and while we appreciate the sponsor's intent, we have deep concerns about the potential impacts of this bill.

When the Admission Committee reviews a student's application for admission, they conduct a holistic, full file review. This review is conducted utilizing 24 Admission Review Factors (see Appendix A) to determine whether the student has the potential to be academically successful at the University of Maryland and also supports the mission of the university as articulated in the Statement of the Philosophy of Undergraduate Admissions (See appendix B).

Offering guaranteed admission to the top 10% of a graduating class would effectively eliminate the consideration of the 23 remaining factors that are considered during the comprehensive review. A review of the Admission Philosophy and the application review factors illustrates that The University of Maryland seeks to enroll students who not only performed well in their classes, but who also chose to challenge themselves by enrolling in the most rigorous courses available to them. We seek students who are active and engaged in their schools and their communities as demonstrated by their participation in academic experiences outside the classroom, sports, clubs, volunteer opportunities, leadership positions, and other enrichment activities. We consider students who receive the eager endorsement of counselors and teachers because of the potential they've witnessed in their interactions with the student.

We contend that a top 10% admission guarantee does not recognize the unique mission of the flagship campus and would in effect eliminate our ability to shape a class of students that is academically competitive, intellectually, racially, and socially diverse, routinely engaged in leadership experiences, and active outside the classroom. *The mission of the University of Maryland, College Park is to provide excellent teaching, research, and service. The University educates students and advances knowledge in areas of importance to the State, the nation, and the world. The University is committed to being a preeminent national center for research and for graduate education, and the institution of choice for Maryland's undergraduates of exceptional ability and promise.* The ability to shape a class of students from among the pool of students who are academically qualified, is key in our ability to realize this mission.

It is critically important to note that we have not yet completed an admission cycle post the Supreme Court decision banning affirmative action in college admissions. This fact makes it difficult for us to

predict the effects of this decision. In fact, the lack of a comprehensive assessment of the impact of a top 10% policy puts the entire state in the tenuous position of implementing a plan without understanding the potential outcome or identifying unintended consequences. This is complicated by the logistical concern created because most high schools (and even entire counties) do not currently report class rank.

Of primary concern with this legislation is that we do not believe it will increase diversity on our campus. We have, in the decades since the early Supreme Court challenges to the University of Michigan policies, explored, developed and implemented a plethora of measures to increase diversity, and to enhance our ability to utilize race-blind measures in order to achieve that goal. In partnership with the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment and with data from College Board, we investigated the outcomes of a top ten percent policy within the state of Maryland. Unfortunately, the results of this study demonstrated that such a policy would not create a more ethnically diverse class. The results demonstrated that there is lack of diversity within the top 10% of Maryland's high school graduating classes.

Other states like Texas and California have implemented class rank admissions policies with mixed results, but it is important to note that the demographic and geographic diversity and the public higher education institutions in Texas and California are extremely different than in the state of Maryland. These differences make it difficult to predict the effect that a class rank admissions policy would have on enrollment at Maryland institutions. As outlined by Kalena E. Cortes and Daniel Klasik in "How the Texas Top 10% Plan failed to attract more students to the state's flagship colleges," although the flagship campuses in Texas saw a modest increase of enrollment among students of color, this likely reflected demographic changes within the community and did not result in freshman classes at their flagship institution that reflected the diversity of their state.

<https://theconversation.com/how-the-texas-top-10-plan-failed-to-attract-more-students-to-the-states-flagship-colleges-156364>

A final point for consideration is that class rank is typically determined by weighted grade point averages (GPA) earned by students who are able to earn extra "weight" through their enrollment in advanced courses like Advanced Placement (AP) and/or International Baccalaureate (IB) classes, and honors courses. This means that a competitive GPA is earned by students who need to not only do well in their classes, but must be enrolled in as many of these advanced courses as possible. It is also important to note that students who are enrolled in early college or middle college courses do not have those courses included in the calculation of their gpa. Data has routinely demonstrated that even at schools with high levels of racial diversity, there is typically a lack of diversity in the AP and IB classes. This simple fact means that students of color are disadvantaged in their ability to rise in class rank in comparison to their white peers. (see link to report entitled "Black and Latino Students Shut Out of Advanced Coursework Opportunities" from Ed Trust

<https://edtrust.org/press-release/black-and-latino-students-shut-out-of-advanced-coursework-opportunities/>

Thank you for your consideration of this complex issue and we look forward to a continued conversation.

## Appendix A

### Admission Review Factors

The University of Maryland admission review process is guided by the principles outlined in the *Statement of the Philosophy of Undergraduate Admissions*. In keeping with this philosophy, admission review factors have been identified that will allow the Admission Committee to identify those applicants, who as individuals and as a group, will enrich and benefit from the campus learning environment, and thus benefit the entire student body.

The undergraduate admissions process is rigorous and individualized. As the University must make fine distinctions among large numbers of highly qualified applicants, the ability to assess consistently all information presented in the application becomes increasingly important. Therefore, the University employs a holistic review process that engages the expertise of professional educators whose judgments--based upon consideration of each applicant's credentials measured by all admissions criteria--build an entering class that will best complement the existing student body and meet the University's mission objectives.

In this context, academic merit is assessed on the basis of each applicant's achievements and potential in a broad range of academic categories, as influenced by the opportunities and challenges faced by the applicant. These categories include:

- \_ Educational Performance
- \_ Potential for College Success
- \_ Potential to Promote Beneficial Educational Outcomes and to Contribute to Campus and Community Life
- \_ Students' Persistence and Commitment to Educational Success.

Each category is assessed by a combination of quantitative and qualitative factors. These factors are flexibly applied, so the listing does not reflect order of importance.

High School Achievement	Extracurricular Activities
Grades in Academic Subjects	Special Talents or Skills
Progression of Performance	Community Involvement
Rank in Class (actual or percentile)	Community Service
Demonstrated Leadership	Academic Endeavors Outside the Classroom
Gender	Residency Status
SAT I or ACT Scores	Quality of Coursework
Work Experience	Recognition of Special Achievements
Extenuating Circumstances	
Socio-Economic Background	Family Educational Background
Geographic Origin	Learning Differences
Breadth of Life Experiences	
English as a Second Language/Language Spoken at Home	
Written Expression of Ideas (as demonstrated in the Essay)	



## **Statement of the Philosophy of Undergraduate Admissions University of Maryland**

The University of Maryland is a publicly funded land grant institution and the flagship of the University System of Maryland. The University's Mission Statement commits it to achieving excellence as the State's primary center for research and graduate education and the institution of choice for undergraduate students of exceptional ability and promise. Consistent with this Mission, the University counts the diversity of its students among its greatest strengths and as an integral component of the educational process and academic excellence.

The undergraduate admissions process, which reflects the University's educational Mission, seeks to identify those applicants, who as individuals and as a group, will enrich and benefit from the campus learning environment, and thus benefit the entire student body. The process is structured to build entering classes of students whose varied backgrounds and experiences provide substantial evidence of their potential to:

1. Meet the University's requirements for academic success.
2. Enrich the University as a heterogeneous community.
3. Add new perspectives to the University's curriculum and scholarly pursuits.
4. Develop personal skills, including leadership, self-confidence, and intellectual engagement.
5. Contribute to the intellectual, cultural, social and political life of the University, State, and Nation.

As the University must make fine distinctions among large numbers of highly qualified applicants, the ability to assess consistently all information presented in the application becomes increasingly important. Therefore, the University employs a rigorous review process that engages the expertise of professional educators in performing individualized and holistic evaluations of each application. Each applicant is assessed on the basis of achievements and potential in a broad range of academic categories, viewed in the context of the opportunities and challenges the applicant faced. These categories include:

1. Strength of educational performance, as measured by the nature and rigor of high school curriculum and academic achievements.
2. Potential for college success, as evidenced by performance on nationally normed standardized tests.
3. Potential to promote beneficial educational outcomes and to make a positive contribution to campus and community life.
4. Persistence, and commitment to educational excellence, as evidenced by demonstrated success in facing adversity and overcoming obstacles.