



Maryland Senate Budget & Taxation Committee

Tuesday, March 1, 2016

Senate Testimony - SB 1052 University of Maryland Strategic Partnership Act of 2016

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Thank you Chairman Kasemeyer, Vice Chairman Madaleno, and members of the committee. I offer my comments on SB 1052—The University of Maryland Strategic Partnership Act—as Vice Chair of the University System of Maryland (USM) Board of Regents.

While the Board supports the *concept* of this bill, we believe that substantial additional study and significant amendments would be required before we could support its passage as legislation.

The USM and the Board of Regents are *very* supportive of efforts that build upon and strengthen the increasingly successful alliance between the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) and the University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP).

As you know, in March 2012, the USM Board of Regents approved a structured collaboration between the two institutions called University of Maryland: *MPowering the State*. Highlights of MPower's results to date include 1,400 invention disclosures, 200 technology licenses, the launch of 40 new startup technology companies, and 60 joint faculty appointments.

There are many elements of SB 1052 that would help to further advance this overall goal of a stronger, broader, more strategic alliance between these two great universities. By acknowledging that the research of the future will require strong partnerships, and by actively supporting and facilitating expansive alliances, aspects of SB 1052 have the potential to elevate our rankings, improve our marketing efforts, and intensify our economic impact.

The legislation calls for the formation of a joint steering committee, similar to the existing MPower committee, to promote alignment, cooperation, and collaboration between the two institutions. It also expands partnerships to more effectively compete for public and private research grants and contracts. The legislation creates two new centers—the University of Maryland Center for Economic and Entrepreneurship Development (UMCEED) in College Park and the Center for Maryland Advanced Ventures in Baltimore. And it includes an important focus on the needs of Baltimore aimed at improving job availability and economic vitality. The Board supports and endorses all those steps.

Of course, when doing something of this import and of this magnitude, it is critical that we understand the effect of its reach and impact. Senate Bill 1052 is very complex, representing a significant transformation, impacting not just UMCP and UMB, but other USM institutions as well.

That being the case, advancing beyond a “strategic partnership” to a merger—with a single president, unified personnel system, etc.—is **not supported** by a majority of the board. The fact is, the USM studied the pros and cons of a merger in 2011 and determined that such a move would not be in the best interests of the System, the State, our institutions, and our students.

To ensure that any legislation that ultimately passes does in fact advance a strategic partnership, as opposed to a merger, the USM Board of Regents requests that it be charged to work within the bill's framework of a more expansive UMCP-UMB partnership. The Board would be tasked with developing an implementation plan over the next 12 months to achieve the goals stated therein. And any specific decisions on the components of the implementation would be decided at that time.

USM Chancellor Robert Caret will speak directly to many of the specific areas of concern shared by members of the USM Board of Regents.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments on SB 1052.