



**Unfavorable**

**Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee**  
***Senate Bill 983 – Higher Education – Academic Program Approval - Objections***

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On behalf of Maryland’s independent colleges and universities and the more than 56,000 students we serve, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to [\*Senate Bill 983 Higher Education - Academic Program Approval - Objections\*](#). SB 983 would expand Maryland’s academic program objection process by allowing objections to any proposed academic program, rather than just graduate programs.

MICUA’s opposition is process-based. The General Assembly has already given this issue substantial attention. In 2023, the State created the Program Approval Process Workgroup to examine Maryland’s academic program review system. That workgroup was co-chaired by Senator Nancy King and Delegate Stephanie Smith and included representation from all the segments of higher education in Maryland. It met over the course of many months, reviewed the existing process in depth, and produced recommendations for statutory reform.

The General Assembly then acted on those recommendations in the 2024 Session by enacting House Bill 1244, now Chapter 963. That law made comprehensive changes to Maryland’s academic program approval process, including new standards for duplication, new hearing procedures, a required administrative procedures guide, and the creation of the Program Review Process Advisory Council (PRPAC). As part of those changes, undergraduate programs implemented with existing resources are excluded from the program review process. This was a deliberate policy choice by the General Assembly after an extensive stakeholder and legislative review process.

The PRPAC, with representation from all segments of higher education, continues to advise MHEC on implementation of House Bill 1244. Under the bylaws approved in July 2024, the Council exists to review the processes and procedures required for the Commission’s academic program review functions. The Council meets monthly and has expended significant time, resources, and expertise to aid MHEC in the implementation of House Bill 1244. The Council will meet monthly throughout 2026 to finalize the implementation and regulations for adoption by the Maryland Higher Education Commission.

For these reasons, MICUA respectfully believes that Senate Bill 983 is premature at this time. The State only recently enacted a major statutory overhaul of the program approval review, and MHEC is still in the process of translating those changes into durable procedures, guidance, and regulations. Revisiting and materially expanding the objection process before the 2024 law is fully implemented risks disrupting that

work, introducing uncertainty into an already evolving framework, and undermining the orderly implementation process the General Assembly itself established.

MICUA therefore respectfully urges an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 983 and asks that the State allow the 2024 reforms, and the advisory and implementation structure created to support them, to be fully carried out before considering additional statutory changes of this magnitude.