



Favorable

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Senate Bill 9 – Maryland Higher Education Commission – Academic Program Approval - Revisions

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On behalf of the member institutions of the Maryland Independent College and University Association (MICUA) and the nearly 55,000 students we serve, I thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of [*Senate Bill 9 – Maryland Higher Education Commission – Academic Program Approval - Revisions*](#).

SB 9 is critically important to the future growth and viability of MICUA institutions. Without it, five institutions in the State of Maryland will have the right of first refusal to develop graduate programs for Maryland's emerging workforce needs. Undergraduate enrollment at MICUA institutions is projected to be relatively flat and the primary area of projected growth is in graduate programs. In a time of declining State budgets and State support, MICUA institutions need to stay competitive, not only with other schools in Maryland, but with peer schools in other states. Having to put a graduate proposal forward and then wait a year while five other institutions decide if they would rather develop the program is inherently unfair and unreasonable. MICUA institutions are already at a severe competitive disadvantage to their out of state peers because 44 other states either wholly or partially exempt private non-profit colleges and universities from any state approval for new programs.

Throughout 2024, at the direction of the Maryland General Assembly, MICUA participated with the other segments of higher education on the Program Approval Workgroup co-chaired by Senator Nancy King and Delegate Stephanie Smith. The workgroup examined the program approval process and developed a list of recommendations for consideration by the General Assembly. Those recommendations were passed in 2024 as part of program approval reform. SB 9 makes the program approval process consistent with the recommendations of the Program Approval Workgroup. More broadly, SB 9 makes higher education in Maryland more competitive with states across the country by allowing all institutions the ability to develop graduate programs for emerging workforce needs.

To attract talent into the State of Maryland and develop the kinds of graduate programs desired by businesses and students alike, the passage of SB 9 is critical. ***For these reasons we request a favorable report for SB 9.***

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony related to Senate Bill 9 on behalf of our institutions. If you have any questions or would like additional information please contact Matt Power, President, Maryland Independent College and University Association, mpower@micua.org.