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COLLEGE of MARYLAND
The Public Honors College

Written Testimony—Oppose

House Ways and Means Committee

House Bill 1657 (*Teachers and Teacher Preparation Programs— Maryland Reading Standards Matrix—Established*)

March 2, 2018

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony to share our concerns with *House Bill 1657 (Teachers and Teacher Preparation Programs—Maryland Reading Standards Matrix—Established)* on behalf of the Maryland Association of Community Colleges, Maryland Independent College and University Association, St. Mary's College of Maryland, and the University System of Maryland. Collectively, we represent 22 four-year and 16 two-year teacher preparation programs in Maryland. While we strongly agree with supporting high standards for reading for PreK-12 students and effective preparation in reading instruction for all teacher candidates in Maryland, we disagree with the specific approaches taken in this legislation. House Bill 1657 would require the development of a new Maryland Reading Standards Matrix, including specific standards from external associations, by March 1, 2019. Further, it would require professional development courses for college faculty members who teach pre-service reading courses and supervise pre-service teaching interns. Finally, the bill would establish an accreditation process for all undergraduate and graduate educator reading preparation programs in the State.

Our institutions are strongly committed to preparing highly effective teachers and incorporating high standards and scientifically-based reading research to raise the achievement of all Maryland students. We support the State's review and accountability processes and the partnership that has been established for reading instruction. These processes directly align college and university faculty with PreK-12 educators and reading specialists to ensure that cutting-edge research informs reading standards, practices, and curricula to benefit all Maryland teachers and students. This legislation, if enacted, would impose costly and redundant requirements on the State's teacher preparation programs, with no evidence that these efforts would lead to improved reading outcomes for teachers or students.

HB 1657 duplicates current efforts to update the State's existing reading standards.

Reading standards for teacher preparation programs have been adopted by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) in consultation with the Professional Standards for Teacher Education Board (PSTEB), within the much broader context of literacy and reading standards for all children PK-12. Standards for reading instruction for all State approved elementary and secondary teacher preparation programs were enacted in 1999; revised in 2004; and are currently under formal review, with extensive involvement from the Maryland higher education community and other stakeholders, including PSTEB, elementary and secondary educators, reading specialists, curriculum specialists, and organizations including Maryland Right to Read and Decoding Dyslexia Maryland. All teacher preparation programs in the State must meet these standards as part of MSDE's program approval process and reading course approval process.

Over the past two years, reading workgroups and panels have been convened by MSDE to review and update the content, standards, and outcomes for the required teacher candidate courses in reading and to further incorporate the latest scientific research on how students learn to read. The entire higher education community has been actively engaged in this work—two-year and four-year, public and independent. Colleges and universities are currently submitting their two revised secondary reading courses to MSDE, and a panel is in place to review them. In addition, MSDE has a review team working on the completion of the framework and review rubrics for the four required courses for elementary teachers and is expected to complete that process in Spring 2018. When concluded, this process will result in extensive revisions to every reading course in every teacher preparation program in the State.

Maryland's new reading standards for teacher preparation have been expanded to align with the latest national standards, current research on reading, and the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards (MCCRS) to provide a more inclusive concept of literacy—not just reading—including oral language and reading and writing competencies for all students. These new standards also include a renewed and updated emphasis on meeting the needs of students with reading difficulties, providing multi-tiered systems of instructional support, and providing teachers with literacy-based strategies for developing students' cultural competence.

Mandating professional development for faculty and researchers with expertise in this area would be wasteful and counterproductive.

College and university faculty are hired with specific subject matter expertise and academic qualifications. Teacher preparation programs in Maryland have members on the faculty who have specific expertise in reading instruction, special education, and related subject areas. Many teacher education faculty in Maryland colleges and universities are conducting the research that informs national standards in reading and other fields. Mandating professional development courses for faculty who already hold a master's or doctoral degree in the field in which they teach and conduct research is not a wise investment of time or resources. Such requirements would negatively affect faculty recruitment and retention efforts in teacher preparation programs in the State.

Maryland has an effective accreditation and approval process for undergraduate and graduate educator reading preparation programs.

Currently, all Maryland teacher preparation programs must go through a State approval process or be accredited by a national accrediting body that has been recognized by MSDE and the Maryland Higher Education Commission, as established in the Chapter 328 Acts of 2017. The majority of Maryland Approved Programs in the State are accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), and many hold specialized accreditations or endorsements in specific subject areas. Programs not accredited by CAEP are assessed by MSDE based on Maryland's standards, including standards for reading instruction. Establishing an accreditation process for a subset of teacher preparation programs, as required in HB 1657, seems to go against the intent of the State law that was enacted in 2017.

For the reasons stated above, we respectfully oppose House Bill 1657 and urge an unfavorable committee report.