

TESTIMONY

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

*SB 646 – Income Tax Credit – Eligible Employers – Eligible Internships*

**Tina Bjarekull, President**

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Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 646, which provides incentives for Maryland businesses to provide internship opportunities to students who are enrolled at public or private nonprofit institutions of higher education in the State. Maryland's independent colleges and universities serve 63,000 students and offer more than 1,400 approved academic programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels. We strongly support this legislation.

Students graduating from Maryland's colleges and universities should be well prepared for employment, and Maryland's businesses and industries should have access to talented young professionals who are trained in Maryland. This legislation supports both of these goals by providing incentives to expand internship experiences for Maryland students and to connect Maryland employers with talented professionals.

Employers increasingly require candidates for employment to demonstrate relative and practical job experience. Even entry-level candidates are expected to demonstrate their qualifications based on the completion of successful internships. Besides increased employability, students who participate in quality internship experiences gain confidence, learn good work habits, and better relate coursework to the profession. Given these benefits, every college seeks to place students in appropriate internship experiences. It is a challenge! There are not enough quality internship opportunities available for students who are willing and would benefit from the experiences.

As the President of MICUA, I also serve as the Managing Director of the Independent College Fund of Maryland (I-Fund), which is a foundation that raises scholarship funds for students and manages an internship program, known as the National Security Scholars Program (NSSP). Through NSSP, students receive security clearances from the National Security Agency and summer internship opportunities at Maryland corporations that work in the intelligence and defense industries. This

program has been highly successful. The internship opportunities are provided in the summer between a student's junior and senior academic year. Most students are hired before they graduate. My experience with NSSP has convinced me that internship opportunities are critically important to students and very beneficial to Maryland employers.

On behalf of Maryland's independent colleges and universities, I urge the State to pass Senate Bill 646, and thank Senator King for her leadership on this issue.