

Support with Amendments**Senate Finance and Budget and Taxation Committees**
Senate Bill 782 (Hester) Workgroup on the Post-COVID-19 Crisis Economic Transition

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On behalf of the member institutions of the Maryland Independent College and University Association (MICUA) and the 58,000 students who we serve, I thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony in support with amendments regarding [Senate Bill 782 \(Hester\) Workgroup on the Post-COVID-19 Crisis Economic Transition](#). This bill establishes a workgroup comprised of members of the Legislature, business sector, nonprofit sector, and various members of the Governor's cabinet such as the Secretary of Commerce, Labor, Transportation, and Housing and Community Development. The Workgroup is charged with making recommendations regarding how the State may adjust economic development and other strategies including telehealth, telework, **online education**, childcare, employment and underemployment, etc. An interim report is due by December 1, 2022, and a final report is due by December 1, 2023.

During the COVID-19 public health crisis, the MICUA schools have been leaders in successfully balancing the best interests of our students, faculty, and staff with the risks of the pandemic. During the spring of 2020, we pivoted to remote/online instruction to ensure that everyone would remain safe during a time of extreme uncertainty. During the fall of 2020, five of the MICUA schools returned to a residential, de-densified, socially-distanced semester while the other eight MICUA schools provided remote instruction. By the spring of 2021, eleven of the MICUA schools had returned to an in person residential college experience, with a hybrid content delivery at the other two schools (for labs and/or senior seminar and thesis requirements). As of the fall of 2021, every MICUA institution has returned to an in person residential college experience.

We applaud the sponsors for their foresight in bringing this important issue to the General Assembly for consideration. **Given the charges of the Workgroup, we believe that including representatives from higher education would add great value.** Not only would higher education be able to assist with conversations about online education, but also telehealth – as we have facilitated services for our students despite the physical challenges of the pandemic; telework – as some of our employees are embracing this model; childcare – as we have found ways to ensure that our faculty and staff are able to return to work when having young children at home; and employment and underemployment – as in several counties, the MICUA institutions are the largest or one of the largest employers.

We would be pleased to provide any additional information that the Committee would find useful as this bill moves through the Legislative Process. **For all of these reasons, MICUA requests a Favorable with Amendments report for Senate Bill 782 to include representatives of higher education in the Workgroup.**