

Oppose —Written Testimony

House Appropriations Committee

*House Bill 1428 Environment – Higher Education Facilities – Mold Hazards and Mold or Moisture Problems*Sara C. Fidler, President, sfidler@micua.org

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On behalf of Maryland's independent colleges and universities and the 65,600 students we serve, we respectfully submit this written testimony in opposition to **House Bill 1428 Environment – Higher Education Facilities – Mold Hazards and Mold or Moisture Problems**. This bill requires the Maryland Department of the Environment, in consultation with the Maryland Higher Education Commission, the Department of General Services, and the Maryland Occupational Safety and Health, to adopt regulations for periodic inspections for the presence of mold hazards and mold or moisture problems in each occupied higher education facility in the State.

We applaud the sponsor for bringing this issue to the attention of the Legislature, as we believe that mold is a serious concern and should not be taken lightly. As the result of this belief, MICUA member institutions have invested heavily in our infrastructure, improved our monitoring and testing for mold, implemented enhanced training, and established remediation protocols to ensure that campus buildings are safe for students, faculty, and staff. Some examples of our policies and protocols follow.

Mount St. Mary's University: During the fall of 2018, when weather patterns were extremely humid and there was an elevation of mold spores along the entire east coast of the United States, the Mount quickly engaged an emergency action team which included physical plant personnel as well as independent testing and an Environmental Compliance Officer from the School of Natural Science and Mathematics. The problem was identified and remediated, and the humidity of the air quality was reduced. Beginning in 2019, humidity sensors were installed, custodial inspections of residence halls began and recur at each academic break, dehumidifiers were installed as necessary, specified cleaning products and devices were (and continue to be) utilized on clothing, furniture, doors, walls, and windows, air scrubbers and fans are available when needed, ultraviolet systems were installed within the HVAC duct work, HEPA filters are utilized in the HVAC systems, and an education campaign takes place on campus regarding effective methods to combat mold (elimination of wet clothing, damp towels, open food containers, etc.).

Hood College: Hood College annually hires a third-party company to test for mold and mildew in the residence halls every August prior to the students' return to campus. Protocols include: moisture and air quality tests in each building; addressing any findings in the written lab reports; contracting for retesting following any performed remediation; and monitoring the humidity/moisture level in the residence halls on a periodic basis.

Maryland Institute College of Art: When the potential of mold is suspected or reported, the Director of Environmental Health and Safety is notified so that an investigation may take place. This includes visual inspection, air testing, and material sampling for verification. If mold is found, remediation is scheduled and conducted by either a specified vendor or MICA personnel with proper training. Remediation may include air barriers and filtration systems. Depending on the severity and location of the mold, inhabitants may be relocated, affected materials will be disposed of, the source of the mold will be determined and corrected, and subsequent air quality testing will take place.

MICUA believes that our campuses have been and will continue to address mold-related environmental risks in a prudent manner. While we support the intent of HB 1428, we are concerned that it will pose redundant requirements on our campuses and impose a financial burden for compliance. Unlike public institutions which may be able to request funding from the State to cover any increased costs associated with the bill's requirements, private nonprofit institutions do not have this same option.

For these reasons, we respectfully request an unfavorable report on HB 1428.