

**House Bill 1143 – Support****TESTIMONY****House Appropriations Committee*****HB - 1143 – Southern Maryland University System of Maryland Partnership Act of 2018*****Tina Bjarekull, President**

March 8, 2018

This legislation repeals all provisions of State law establishing and governing the operations of the Southern Maryland Higher Education Center (SMHEC). For the past two decades, Maryland's independent colleges and universities have offered undergraduate and graduate degree programs at the SMHEC. Many of these programs were established at the request of State and local elected officials to meet specific workforce needs.

Over the years, Johns Hopkins University, Notre Dame of Maryland University, Stevenson University, and Capitol Technology University have served thousands of students at the Center and partnered with local employers to address workforce needs. We are proud of the service we have provided in partnership with the SMHEC, and we know it has been impactful to the Tri-county community.

Launching new academic programs at off-campus locations takes considerable investments of personnel and resources. Obviously, the MICUA member institutions want to preserve these past investments. Furthermore, Maryland's independent colleges and universities and other non-USM institutions have the capacity to establish new academic programs that effectively address the expanding and advanced academic needs of the Tri-county civilian and military workforce. Therefore, we appreciate the commitments made by the governing boards of the University System of Maryland (USM) and the SMHEC to maintain a regional academic center that is open to non-USM institutions.

The Center's organizational structure, as described in the memorandum of understanding between SMHEC and USM, will create efficiencies, expand capacity, and stimulate additional partnerships between the higher education community and local industries. The proposed structure will also facilitate greater opportunities for collaborative research and technology transfer. Maryland's independent colleges and universities look forward to working with USM and the Southern region on these exciting developments.

**For the reasons stated above, MICUA urges the Committee to give House Bill 1143 a positive Committee report.**