

Written Support**House Health and Government Operations Committee**
***House Bill 279 (Rogers) Veterans Affairs – Office of Communications and
Public Affairs – Veterans Advocacy and Education Act*****Sara C. Fidler, President****sfidler@micua.org****February 8, 2022**

On behalf of Maryland’s independent colleges and universities and the 58,000 students we serve, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony to support ***House Bill 279 (Rogers) Veterans Affairs – Office of Communications and Public Affairs – Veterans Advocacy and Education Act***. The bill renames the Outreach and Advocacy Program within the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) to be the Office of Communications and Public Affairs. MDVA, in partnership with the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), is required to actively assist veterans and their dependents to access education and training benefits.

The State of Maryland and Maryland Institutions of Higher Education established a collaboration with MDVA on January 31, 2011, to serve veterans and their families and help them become members of our campus communities. The inclusion of veterans contributes to the diverse student population at MICUA institutions. The Maryland College Collaboration for Student Veterans Commission was established in 2016 (Ch.413 of 2016), and MICUA is a designated representative on the Commission. The Commission’s work consists of “ensuring the educational success of returning veterans, including their recruitment, successful transition into higher education, retention, and eventual graduation.” HB 279 creates a central location within MDVA for veterans to learn more about the various educational opportunities in the State and improve access to obtain a college degree and training for the workforce. The bill continues the good work of previous efforts for veterans and their families.

There are several MICUA institutions with deeply rooted connections to military bases in close proximity and they have demonstrated a strong commitment to provide a supportive school environment for all students, including veterans and their families.

We thank the sponsor for introducing this important piece of legislation. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact Irnande Altema, Associate Vice President for Government and Business Affairs, ialtema@micua.org.

For these reasons, MICUA urges a favorable Committee report for House Bill 279.