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Dear Honorable Delegates:

The Council of University System Staff asks you to vote against the Department of Legislative Services (DLS) Proposal R30B00. The proposed additional budget cuts of about \$39 million for USM would have a negative impact in three specific areas.

First, the proposals language reduces the general fund support by \$29 million. This can lead to further hiring freezes, furloughs, and layoffs for staff and erode the quality of education that students have come to expect at USM institutions.

Second, a recommendation was submitted to limit the growth in tuition and fee revenue. If the State further cuts support to higher education and also impose a cap on tuition and fees, the quality of education will suffer and an economic hardship would be placed upon the staff and faculty.

Finally, the DLS proposes in its supporting argument, based on a distortion of facts, to reduce the un-restricted fund appropriation by \$9,313,500. This amount is related to tuition waivers provided as an employment benefit to USM employees. The proposal erroneously states that tuition waivers do not exist for other State employees; therefore, USM employees should not have this benefit. Other State agencies generally have funds for employee development and training and can cover tuition costs for their staff in that way.

Additionally, tuition remission is an essential recruitment and retention tool for USM. Many employees, System wide, have accepted employment and have dedicated themselves to their work for years and expect to have this benefit available for their dependents' education and for themselves. It would be horrendous for USM employees to lose this benefit. There are many who have no other financial means to educate themselves and/or their dependents.

We understand the need to balance the budget; however, it is clear that the universities and colleges in Maryland have already absorbed their fair share of cuts. Higher Education is taking 1/3 of the entire cut to the State's general fund, while it represents only 7.5 % of the total budget.

In conclusion, we ask that you support staff (approximately 16,000 Exempt and Nonexempt), the USM, and the continued eminence of higher education in this State by voting against the Department of Legislative Services Proposal R30B00.

Joe Hill, Chair, UMBC Legislative District 10
Roy Ross Past Chair, UMB Legislative District 7
Andrianna Stuart, Vice Chair, UMCP Legislative District 21
Frances P. Younger, UMCES Legislative District 29
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