



March 17, 2026

Dear UMB Community,

We are writing to keep you informed with periodic updates on the University of Maryland, Baltimore's (UMB) work to protect access to graduate and professional education and to advocate for policies that support the nation's health, legal, and human services workforce.

This month, on behalf of our University, the Office of the Provost **submitted a public comment letter** addressing the U.S. Department of Education's proposed Reimagining and Improving Student Education rule, which would implement the student loan provisions of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA).

In the letter, we expressed concern that the proposed elimination of Federal Direct Graduate PLUS loans — combined with the unchanged \$20,500 annual cap on Unsubsidized Stafford borrowing — will create large funding gaps for students in licensure-required programs such as physical therapy, physician assistant, nursing, social work, and law.

We urged the Department of Education to broaden the definition of "professional student" to include licensure-required graduate clinical and legal programs, and to ensure that federal financing structures support, rather than constrain, the state's health care, human services, and legal workforce capacity.

Also this month, Maryland Attorney General Anthony Brown co-led a coalition of 24 attorneys general and two governors in submitting a comment letter opposing the same proposed rule. The **news release issued by Brown's office** specifically highlighted our School of Nursing and the critical need for nurse practitioners in health care.

And, just last week, U.S. Sen. Angela Alsobrooks of Maryland introduced the Professional Degree Access Restoration Act to reverse the OBBBA reductions in federal loan availability for graduate and professional students. The bill, co-sponsored by Maryland's senior U.S. senator, Chris Van Hollen, and six other senators, aims to amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to expand

opportunities for individuals pursuing careers in nursing, teaching, social work, medicine, and other critical professions.

UMB President Bruce Jarrell was quoted in [a news release issued by Alsobrooks](#), saying, “As communities across the U.S. grapple with serious shortages in health care and other service professions, we must expand — not restrict — access to graduate and professional education.”

These represent just three recent examples of the impact of our University’s efforts to break down financial barriers for students and strengthen the workforce development pipeline.

We would like to again take this opportunity to thank our many faculty, staff, and students who continue to engage in advocacy efforts. Your work has real impact — not only on the UMB community, but also on health, law, and human services in Maryland and across the United States.

Sincerely,

Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS
President

Roger J. Ward, EdD, JD, MSL, MPA
Provost and Executive Vice President