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Maggie McIntosh
Appropriations Committee
Room 121, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401
Cc: Members, Appropriations Committee

Honorable Chair McIntosh and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

I am a scientist at the Harvard Medical School and also a fellow at the Berkman Klein Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University, where I study the impact of commercialization on scientific research. I am writing to express my support for HB 1497, put forward by Delegate Waldstreicher, and I hope to see it pass.

As a graduate of the University of Maryland, a leading research state university, I strongly believe that publicly funded research should serve public interests. Unfortunately, there are routes by which research produced at universities can be exploited for the gains of a few at the expense of the public – and HB 1497 can help block some of these routes.

Groups known as non-practicing entities (NPEs), colloquially referred to as “patent trolls,” acquire patents en masse for the chief purpose of using these for monetary gain through litigation, or threats of litigation, against those who may be actually putting ideas and technologies to practice. NPEs not only hinder earnest research applications by others, they also add to the load of an overburdened patent system (for which taxpayers bear the brunt).

My research has shown that university patents, including those produced by public universities, can end up in the hands of NPEs. For instance, as of 2016, the notorious NPE ‘Intellectual Ventures’ had nearly 500 patents that originated from American universities in its portfolio (which contains roughly 30,000 patents in total), including some from the University of Maryland.

HB 1497 can help ensure that public universities license and assign patents with public interests in mind, and avoid transferring the valuable work of a collective to those who seek to exploit the U.S. patent system. I wholeheartedly endorse this bill and congratulate Delegate Waldstreicher and colleagues for this initiative. This is an

opportunity for the state of Maryland to set an example for other states by adopting a framework to academic research that puts public interests front and center.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'YK' or 'Yarden Katz', written in a cursive style.

Yarden Katz, Ph.D.