

FINANCE COMMITTEE

**Testimony by
Dr. Brad Phillips, Executive Director
February 22, 2023**

SB551 - Education - Service Year Option Program - Establishment (Serving Every Region Through Vocational Exploration Act of 2023)

POSITION: Favorable

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC), representing Maryland's 16 community colleges, support this legislation and thanks Governor Moore, Senate President Ferguson, and all co-sponsors for their introduction of this important bill.

The establishment of a Service Year Program will help develop a more skilled, humanitarian and educated workforce, essential to Maryland's continued economic growth. The Program as structured has the potential provide more equitable access and opportunity for our young people, which is required to address the social needs of all Maryland communities.

Of those Maryland high school graduates who pursue postsecondary education immediately after high school, almost one-third enroll in community college. Maryland's community colleges, therefore, could enroll recent high school graduates both before and/or after their Service Year participation. A similar possibility exists for recent GED-recipients, many of whom earn their GEDs at their local community college. This means our institutions will both benefit from receiving students who have completed their Service Year Program and may also provide participants to the Service Year program, including dually enrolled and newly enrolled students.

The service year option incentivizes participation in meaningful social service and the participants' pursuit of higher education and employment-enhancing certifications. We fully support the Governor's mission to introduce a life-enhancing program for Maryland's young people.

MACC requests a favorable on SB551.