

Jessica Fitzwater
County Executive



Brad W. Young
County Council President

FREDERICK COUNTY GOVERNMENT

February 28, 2024

Honorable Guy Guzzone
Chair, Budget and Taxation Committee
Maryland State Senate
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Honorable Ben Barnes
Chair, Appropriations Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
121 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Guzzone and Chair Barnes,

As the County Executive and the County Council President of Frederick County, we urge the General Assembly to reject the proposed cuts to Maryland's state community college funding. Community colleges are the cornerstone to higher education in Maryland and they serve many of our most vulnerable student populations. Adequate funding for our community colleges is not only critical for establishing a diverse and skilled workforce, but also an important investment in Maryland's economic development.

State-level funding for Maryland's community colleges is based on a funding formula which aims to provide community colleges with predictable operations support and help maintain affordable tuition rates. The current formula model bases community college funding on a percentage of the appropriation per full-time enrollment student at four-year institutions of higher education.

Unfortunately, there has been a historic imbalance between funding for public four-year institutions and Maryland's community colleges. From 2009 to 2022, the State shortchanged community colleges by over \$140 million, further harming Maryland's most vulnerable student population.

Conversely, the State has fulfilled its obligation over the past two years, fully funding Maryland's community colleges for the first time. This is a recognition that our students who enroll in community colleges deserve the same level of support as those who are in public universities.

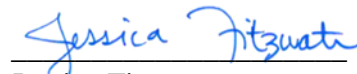
Here in Frederick County, our emphasis on the importance of community college can be seen and felt through our partnership with Frederick Community College. However, when State funding lags, additional pressure builds on county budgets and student tuition. Frederick County is similarly facing budget constraints, and these cuts will result in tuition increases at a time when training and education opportunities are most needed to address workforce shortages across industries.

Maryland's economic future is dependent on the success of its workforce, and the development of that workforce begins in our local communities. Community colleges are pivotal in uplifting our communities by collaborating with local employers to develop tailored workforce training that equips our residents with the skills and credentials necessary to secure well-paying jobs, reduce unemployment, and stimulate local economic growth.

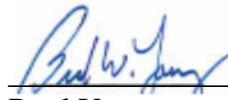
Maryland's community colleges are graduating more students than ever, and enrollment is up eight percent over last year. Given those successes, combined with the lengthy history of inequitable funding, permanently slashing funding for community colleges is particularly untoward.

Frederick County recognizes that community colleges are critical for helping Marylanders re-enter the workforce and rebuild after the pandemic. We urge the General Assembly to fully fund community colleges in FY 2025 and maintain the same level of support moving forward, demonstrating the State's commitment to all students and to an equitable distribution of resources.

Sincerely,



Jessica Fitzwater
County Executive



Brad Young
County Council President