

Senate Bill 12
Board of Trustees, College of Southern Maryland
Unfavorable Report
January 24, 2024

As the Board of Trustees for the College of Southern Maryland, we request an Unfavorable Report for SB 12 – College of Southern Maryland – Board of Trustees Membership – Alterations.

While recognizing the distinct nature of proposed Senate Bills SB 12 and SB 81, it is important to note that these bills are similar in that they both address governance and resource allocation within the context of a regional framework. Our concern lies in the potential for the proposed changes to create imbalances and disrupt the collaborative spirit of the existing board and the operational efficiencies and student equity that have been achieved through the current legislation.

The College of Southern Maryland is a regional college, governed by a Board of Trustees representing each county equally. Founded in 1958 in Charles County, the college expanded in 1978 to serve St. Mary’s County and again in 1980 to serve Calvert County. In 2000, the State formalized this tri-county scope by creating the regional College of Southern Maryland.

Shared ownership is the principle behind establishing a Regional Community College. If trustee representation is no longer equal, as proposed in SB 12, the concept of a regional community college as defined in Section 16-202 is in jeopardy. Section 16-601 of the Education Code specifically states the intent to create a regional college which is defined in Section 16-202 which requires a board of trustees to have an equal number of members from each county it serves.

The designation for being a regional community college carries with it a capital projects funding formula of 75% state allocation and 25% county allocation. Two regional community colleges in Maryland – CSM and Chesapeake College – have this unique allocation. With unequal county representation, CSM would no longer be a regional college and therefore ineligible to apply this formula. Capital project costs would be shared equally, 50/50, by the state and respective county.

The fiscal impact of the 11 projects that the College of Southern Maryland has completed since 2000 as a regional community college would have been an additional \$37.8 million to the local jurisdictions without this regional designation. The future fiscal impact on county shares of capital projects in the next five years would be an additional \$4 million in St. Mary’s County and an additional \$18.8 million in Charles County.

Collaboration is important to best serve the needs of all residents of Southern Maryland. However, SB 12 would create an imbalance, and if one county has more representation than the other two, it can lead to the perception of disparities in educational opportunities and services among the three counties. An equal number of representatives assumes an equal say in decision-making and resource allocation.

When creating the College of Southern Maryland, much deliberation by the respective Boards of Commissioners and our delegations determined the most effective and equitable approach to governance was through a shared ownership model of board leadership whereby each county would be equally represented. There are nine of us, three from each county appointed by the Governor, and this equal representation benefits both our communities and our students.

As a board, the nine trustees have always and will continue to work collaboratively with profound respect and recognition of each other's perspectives. Each of the trustees performs our duties with due diligence to best serve the needs of all residents of Southern Maryland. One priority of the Board of Trustees is to ensure that the College serves all students equally and equitably. As a regional community college, CSM supports each location equitably, in accordance with their unique needs and student population. As of FY23, there are 14,329 students from throughout Southern Maryland attending CSM. Of these students, almost 45 percent attend two or more campus locations across the three counties and another 32 percent take online classes. Students are CSM Hawks, regardless of where they live or attend class. They do not see county boundaries or limitations in educational services, programs, or offerings because we collaborate from a regional approach.

The Board should be balanced, unbiased, and, while representing their respective counties, have a clear understanding of the regional significance of their decisions. We assure you that we do. At the heart of this institution is our shared commitment to meet the needs of our diverse and changing region. We are truly honored and privileged to serve the students who come to our institution from all corners of our region seeking knowledge, skills, a better income, and more opportunities to support themselves and their families.

As our president, Dr. Yolanda Wilson so eloquently reminds us through the African proverb – to go far, we must go together. As Trustees for the College of Southern Maryland, “going together” means equally sharing and embracing our responsibility for the benefit of all of Southern Maryland. We ask the committee's unfavorable report to SB 12.

Board of Trustees, College of Southern Maryland

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