

Senate Bill 12
Shawn Coates, Chair, Board of Trustees, College of Southern Maryland
Unfavorable Report

January 24, 2024

I am Shawn Coates, Trustee Chair for the College of Southern Maryland. On behalf of college's full board, I ask for an unfavorable report for SB 12 – College of Southern Maryland – Board of Trustees Membership – Alterations

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.

Much deliberation by the three respective Boards of County Commissioners and our Delegations at that time 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 in my experience, this equal representation benefits both our communities and our students.

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.

As a Trustee since 2018 and as the grandson of Trustee Emeritus Veronica Coates, one of Charles County's community leaders who served as the college's Trustee from 1976 to 1993, I am humbled to walk in her footsteps and to work collectively, collaboratively, and respectfully with my fellow Trustees.

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.

I ask the committee’s unfavorable report to SB 12. Thank you.

Shawn Coates, Chair
Board of Trustees, College of Southern Maryland