



House Bill 623
Education – Purple Star Schools Program and Purple Star Colleges Program
Dr. Yolanda Wilson, President, College of Southern Maryland
FAVORABLE

February 6, 2026

The College of Southern (CSM) supports House Bill 623 which would establish the Purple Star Colleges Program to recognize higher education institutions that provide strong services and support for military-connected students.

As a regional community college, the College of Southern Maryland takes great pride in partnering with active-duty military, veterans and military dependent students to ensure every student receives the most benefits available as they pursue their education.

In the 2024-2025 academic year, CSM enrolled approximately 1,100 students who self-identified as military-connected (via CSM admissions application). The College had approximately 560 students who submitted requests to use VA education benefits in the same year, resulting in over \$650,000 in Post 9/11 VA education benefit payments.

Overall, CSM currently meets most of the criteria outlined in the bill and should be able to meet the remaining requirements without significant investment. For instance, CSM's veterans' affairs team currently acts in the role of a Uniformed Services liaison. This is considered a "best practice" to strive for military-connected students to have a single point of contact whenever possible. CSM's dedicated staff serves in the following capacities:

- Provides information to newly enrolled students (this information is captured on the admissions application and when the student initiates the process to use VA education benefits at CSM);
- Acts as the point of contact – this includes providing academic advising, degree planning, providing information on financial aid programs (military, MHEC, ED and CSM), providing information on CSM resources, including the student veteran organization; and,
- Partners with the CSM student veterans club, student government association and other CSM departments to provide programming for newly enrolled military-connected students.

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Additionally, CSM's website provides information on both internal college resources as well as external resources, including veteran-friendly employer sites, VA and military spouse education resources, and veteran-focused mediation services available in the Tri-County area.

CSM has partnered with the Maryland Department of Labor to have monthly information sessions (rotating between all three counties). CSM hosted Veterans' academic and career resource days. In addition, CSM is represented as an ex-officio member of the Calvert County Commission for Veterans Military Families and multiple CSM staff members have been members of the Charles County Commission for Veterans Affairs.

Over the past years, CSM is honored to have earned national recognition multiple times as a Military Friendly School by Viqtory, Inc, through standards that measure an organization's commitment, effort, and success in creating sustainable and meaningful benefits for the military community. Most recently, the College was designated as a 2025-2026 Military Friendly® Silver school and a Military Spouse Friendly® school.

The College of Southern Maryland will continue to expand our commitment to our veterans and military-connected families by providing the resources and support where our military-affiliated students can find purpose, belonging, and a clear path forward in meeting their educational goals and career success.

CSM would be honored to receive the Purple Star Colleges designation, recognizing the strong services and support that we provide for our military-connected students. As president of the College of Southern Maryland, I respectfully request your favorable report for HB 623.



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