



March 5, 2026

The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chair  
Senate Education, Energy and Environment Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 East  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Testimony in Opposition to Senate Bill 534 – Frederick Community College – Board of Trustees – Meeting and Training Requirements

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Frederick Community College Board of Trustees (the Board) and thank you to the Frederick County Delegation for their communication with the Board during the delegation process earlier this Session. The Board respectfully opposes Senate Bill 534, which would mandate in statute certain requirements for Board meetings, including requiring the opportunity for public comment at all Board meetings and mandating the recording of all meetings and certain posting requirements for those recordings. The Board voted at its January 21, 2026 meeting not to support the legislation and, at its February 18, 2026 meeting, to provide testimony in opposition.

The Board is strongly supportive of transparency and public engagement practices and has already taken several proactive steps to ensure the Frederick County community has the ability to meaningfully engage with the Board and its members on FCC policies and matters. The Board already conducts its work in full compliance with the Open Meetings Act. Agendas are posted in advance, meetings are open to the public, and minutes are published. In 2021, the Board moved its regular meetings to a larger venue on campus to better accommodate public presence and make it a more welcoming environment for members of the community and permit virtual access to meetings for community members who cannot attend in person. Earlier this year, the Board affirmatively voted to amend its bylaws to allow for public comment at Board meetings. These practices demonstrate a commitment to transparency without the need for statutory prescription and illustrate the Board's ability and willingness to work with our public officials to improve transparency and access through the institutional bylaw process. Members of the public are also free to share feedback with Trustees at any time outside of public meetings (via email), and the Board intentionally seeks community input through structured community input processes to inform the long-term direction of the College.



While the Board supports openness and transparency intended by the proposed legislation, it has concerns that SB534 sets a precedence of codifying Board practices and potentially politicizing Board activities. We are not elected officials, and the work before us is nonpartisan in nature. Community colleges in Maryland are governed by Governor-appointed Boards that are responsible for setting policies tailored to the needs of their counties and students. The proposed legislation would replace this longstanding local discretion with a one-size-fits-all statutory mandate. Boards already have the authority to adopt public participation policies that reflect their community's expectations, and many—including Frederick Community College—have done so. Codifying specific operational requirements in state law would limit the Board's ability to adjust procedures as circumstances evolve. Additionally, creating statutory requirements for select entities already subject to the Open Meetings Act raises questions of consistency and necessity.

The proposed legislation would have operational and fiscal impacts on FCC due to the recording requirements in the Bill. The Board has consulted with similar bodies in Frederick County, including the Frederick County Board of Education and potential vendors, about technology modifications it would need to ensure reasonable and regular compliance with the proposed bill. Based on that research, initial cost estimates indicate a \$15,000 cost to implement enhanced meeting recording capabilities and ensure recording fidelity. During this difficult fiscal environment when budgets and funding are increasingly tight, any additional unfunded mandates on Board operations are difficult to fund.

With respect to trustee training, every member of this Board participates in a comprehensive onboarding process, including mandatory ethics training with the Maryland State Ethics Commission and annual financial disclosure filings. FCC Board Policy requires the Board maintain at least two Trustees who have completed Maryland Open Meetings Act training conducted by the Office of the Attorney General; the Board currently has four Trustees who have completed this training. Trustees also engage in ongoing professional development through nationally recognized organizations, including the Association of Community College Trustees and Govern for Impact. Since January 2023, the Board has participated in more than 40 hours of professional development retreats, all documented in publicly posted Board minutes, and conducts regular self-evaluation in accordance with Board policy.

Again, the Board thanks the Committee and the Delegation for the opportunity to share its concerns about Senate Bill 534 as introduced and respectfully urges an unfavorable report. The Board already operates within a comprehensive statutory and regulatory framework that ensures transparency, accountability, and responsible governance. Frederick Community College was recently reaffirmed for accreditation by the Middle States Commission on Higher

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Education, which identified no areas of non-compliance related to Board governance, transparency, or public engagement. The Board remains committed to working with the members of the Delegation, this Committee and the Frederick County community to ensure transparency and enhanced communication with the public and looks forward to pursuing those goals through a collaborative, local process.

Respectfully submitted,

Frederick Community College Board of Trustees