

HOUSE BILL 479

F1, F2

6lr1391

CF 6lr2573

By: **Delegates Patterson, Boafo, Davis, Fennell, J. Long, McComas, Odom, and Turner**

Introduced and read first time: January 23, 2026

Assigned to: Ways and Means

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program and Program **3 Workgroup – Establishment**

4 FOR the purpose of establishing the Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway
5 Program; requiring the State Department of Education to administer and
6 implement, in consultation with the Maryland Higher Education Commission, the
7 Program subject to a certain condition; requiring a Program student to be considered
8 a dually enrolled student for a certain purpose; requiring the University System of
9 Maryland to develop, in consultation with the Department and the Commission, the
10 Program and the teacher preparation pathway; establishing the Southern Maryland
11 Early College Teacher Pathway Program Workgroup; and generally relating to the
12 Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program and the Southern
13 Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program Workgroup.

14 BY adding to

Article – Education

Section 7-2201 through 7-2204 to be under the new subtitle “Subtitle 22. Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program”

Annotated Code of Maryland

(2025 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

20 BY adding to

Article – Education

Section 12–124

Annotated Code of Maryland

(2022 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

25 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,

Article – Education

Section 15–127

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



Annotated Code of Maryland (2022 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

Preamble

4 WHEREAS, Maryland faces a critical shortage of qualified teachers, especially in
5 high-need schools and rural areas such as Southern Maryland where local school systems
6 report persistent vacancies in core subject areas and growing challenges in retaining
7 educators; and

8 WHEREAS, The Blueprint for Maryland's Future calls for expanding high-quality
9 pathways into the teaching profession, increasing college readiness, and improving
10 workforce pipelines in every region of the State; and

11 WHEREAS, Nationally, early college programs have proven to increase college
12 enrollment, degree attainment, and workforce participation — particularly among
13 first-generation and low-income students — and can be leveraged to build stronger and
14 more diverse teacher pipelines; and

15 WHEREAS, Despite strong national evidence of success, Maryland lags behind most
16 states in providing early postsecondary opportunities for its students; and

17 WHEREAS, As of 2023, Maryland ranked low nationally for dual enrollment
18 participation as a percent of high school enrollment at 10% and ranked low nationally for
19 dual enrollment as a percent of undergraduate enrollment at 7%; and

20 WHEREAS, As of 2022, participation in dual enrollment and early college programs
21 in Maryland is overly concentrated at community colleges with only 5% of students enrolled
22 through public four-year institutions — compared to approximately 28% nationally —
23 limiting exposure to bachelor's degree pathways, including teacher preparation programs;
24 and

25 WHEREAS, Southern Maryland's geography, limited access to nearby four-year
26 institutions, and workforce needs make it an ideal region for a program that bridges high
27 schools, community colleges, and the University System of Maryland regional higher
28 education centers to create a seamless teacher preparation pathway; and

29 WHEREAS, Establishing a Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway
30 Program will align with the Blueprint's goals; now, therefore,

31 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
32 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Education

SUBTITLE 22. SOUTHERN MARYLAND EARLY COLLEGE TEACHER PATHWAY PROGRAM.

1 7-2201.

2 IN THIS SUBTITLE, "PROGRAM" MEANS THE SOUTHERN MARYLAND EARLY
3 COLLEGE TEACHER PATHWAY PROGRAM.

4 7-2202.

5 (A) THERE IS A SOUTHERN MARYLAND EARLY COLLEGE TEACHER
6 PATHWAY PROGRAM.

7 (B) THE PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM IS TO:

8 (1) CREATE A STRUCTURED, CREDIT-BEARING PATHWAY FOR HIGH
9 SCHOOL STUDENTS TO BEGIN PREPARATION TO TEACH PRIMARY AND SECONDARY
10 EDUCATION;

11 (2) EXPAND ACCESS TO AND ENSURE THE AFFORDABILITY OF
12 HIGHER EDUCATION FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO ARE:

13 (I) HISTORICALLY UNDERREPRESENTED IN HIGHER
14 EDUCATION; AND

15 (II) FROM RURAL AREAS OF THE STATE;

16 (3) BUILD A STRONG AND DIVERSE TEACHER PIPELINE TO SERVE THE
17 STATE'S PUBLIC PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS; AND

18 (4) SERVE AS A MODEL TO BE REPLICATED FOR REGIONAL
19 IMPLEMENTATION STATEWIDE.

20 (C) THE DEPARTMENT, IN CONSULTATION WITH THE MARYLAND HIGHER
21 EDUCATION COMMISSION, SHALL ADMINISTER AND IMPLEMENT THE PROGRAM ON
22 COMPLETION OF THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF MARYLAND'S DEVELOPMENT OF THE
23 PROGRAM IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 12-124 OF THIS ARTICLE.

24 7-2203.

25 A PROGRAM STUDENT SHALL BE CONSIDERED A DUALLY ENROLLED STUDENT
26 FOR PURPOSES OF § 15-127 OF THIS ARTICLE AND MAY NOT BE REQUIRED TO PAY
27 ANY COST THAT IS RELATED TO ENROLLMENT OR PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAM,
28 INCLUDING TUITION AND MANDATORY FEES.

1 7-2204.

2 THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ADOPT REGULATIONS TO CARRY OUT THE
3 PROVISIONS OF THIS SUBTITLE.

4 12-124.

5 (A) (1) IN THIS SECTION THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS
6 INDICATED.

7 (2) "PROGRAM" HAS THE MEANING STATED IN § 7-2201 OF THIS
8 ARTICLE.

9 (3) "PROGRAM WORKGROUP" MEANS THE SOUTHERN MARYLAND
10 EARLY COLLEGE TEACHER PATHWAY PROGRAM WORKGROUP.

11 (B) IN ACCORDANCE WITH SUBSECTION (C) OF THIS SECTION AND IN
12 CONSULTATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT AND THE COMMISSION, THE UNIVERSITY
13 SHALL DEVELOP THE PROGRAM AND THE TEACHER PREPARATION PATHWAY IN
14 SOUTHERN MARYLAND.

15 (C) (1) THE UNIVERSITY SHALL CONVENE A SOUTHERN MARYLAND
16 EARLY COLLEGE TEACHER PATHWAY PROGRAM WORKGROUP TO DEVELOP THE
17 PROGRAM AND THE TEACHER PREPARATION PATHWAY IN SOUTHERN MARYLAND.

18 (2) THE PROGRAM WORKGROUP SHALL CONSIST OF THE FOLLOWING
19 MEMBERS:

20 (I) ONE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR,
21 APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR;

22 (II) ONE MEMBER OF THE SENATE OF MARYLAND, APPOINTED
23 BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE;

24 (III) ONE MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF DELEGATES, APPOINTED
25 BY THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE;

26 (IV) THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT, OR THE STATE
27 SUPERINTENDENT'S DESIGNEE;

28 (V) THE CHAIR OF THE ACCOUNTABILITY AND
29 IMPLEMENTATION BOARD, OR THE CHAIR'S DESIGNEE;

1 (VI) THE SECRETARY, OR THE SECRETARY'S DESIGNEE;

2 (VII) THE CHANCELLOR, OR THE CHANCELLOR'S DESIGNEE;

3 (VIII) THE SENIOR VICE CHANCELLOR FOR ACADEMIC AND
4 STUDENT AFFAIRS OF THE UNIVERSITY, OR THE SENIOR VICE CHANCELLOR'S
5 DESIGNEE;

6 (IX) THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM
7 OF MARYLAND AT SOUTHERN MARYLAND, OR THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S
8 DESIGNEE;

9 (X) THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND,
10 COLLEGE PARK CAMPUS, OR THE PRESIDENT'S DESIGNEE;

11 (XI) THE PRESIDENT OF TOWSON UNIVERSITY, OR THE
12 PRESIDENT'S DESIGNEE;

13 (XII) THE PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE OF SOUTHERN
14 MARYLAND, OR THE PRESIDENT'S DESIGNEE;

15 (XIII) THE COUNTY SUPERINTENDENTS, OR THE COUNTY
16 SUPERINTENDENTS' DESIGNEES, OF THE FOLLOWING COUNTIES:

17 1. CALVERT COUNTY;

18 2. CHARLES COUNTY; AND

19 3. ST. MARY'S COUNTY; AND

20 (XIV) ANY OTHER MEMBERS DESIGNATED BY THE UNIVERSITY.

21 (3) ON OR BEFORE JUNE 30, 2029, THE UNIVERSITY SHALL REPORT
22 TO THE DEPARTMENT, THE COMMISSION, THE GOVERNOR, AND, IN ACCORDANCE
23 WITH § 2-1257 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
24 ON:

25 (I) THE PROGRAM AND THE TEACHER PREPARATION PATHWAY
26 IN SOUTHERN MARYLAND, INCLUDING:

27 1. THE STRUCTURE OF THE TEACHER PREPARATION
28 PATHWAY;

2. AN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE TEACHER 2 PREPARATION PATHWAY; AND

6 (II) THE USE OF STATE FUNDS TO DEVELOP THE PROGRAM AND
7 THE TEACHER PREPARATION PATHWAY IN SOUTHERN MARYLAND.

8 (D) FOR EACH OF FISCAL YEARS 2028 AND 2029, THE GOVERNOR SHALL
9 INCLUDE IN THE ANNUAL BUDGET BILL AN APPROPRIATION OF \$250,000 TO THE
10 UNIVERSITY TO SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROGRAM AND THE TEACHER
11 PREPARATION PATHWAY IN SOUTHERN MARYLAND IN ACCORDANCE WITH THIS
12 SECTION.

13 15-127.

14 (a) (1) In this section, "dually enrolled student" means a student who is dually
15 enrolled in:

16 (i) A secondary school in the State; and

17 (ii) An institution of higher education in the State.

(2) "Dually enrolled student" includes a student enrolled in a credit or noncredit certificate or license program, course, or sequence of courses that leads to certification or licensure at an institution of higher education in the State.

21 (b) A public institution of higher education may not charge tuition to a dually
22 enrolled student.

23 (c) Subject to subsection (d) of this section, for each dually enrolled student who
24 is enrolled in a public school in the county, the county board shall pay 75% of the cost of
25 tuition for a public institution of higher education in the State.

26 (d) (1) If there is an agreement before July 1, 2020, between a public school
27 and a public institution of higher education in which the public institution of higher
28 education charges less than 75% of the cost of tuition to a dually enrolled student, the
29 county board shall pay the cost of tuition under the existing agreement.

30 (2) Every 2 years, a public school and a public institution of higher
31 education may evaluate and modify an agreement made under paragraph (1) of this
32 subsection.

1 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July
2 1, 2026.