

HOUSE BILL 479

F1, F2

6lr1391
CF 6lr2573

By: **Delegates Patterson, Boaf, 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
15 Article – Education
16 Section 7–2201 through 7–2204 to be under the new subtitle “Subtitle 22. Southern
17 Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program”
18 Annotated Code of Maryland
19 (2025 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

20 BY adding to
21 Article – Education
22 Section 12–124
23 Annotated Code of Maryland
24 (2022 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

25 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,
26 Article – Education
27 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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
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 DUALY 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;**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1. CALVERT COUNTY;

2. CHARLES COUNTY; AND

3. ST. MARY'S COUNTY; AND

(XIV) ANY OTHER MEMBERS DESIGNATED BY THE UNIVERSITY.

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

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

1. THE STRUCTURE OF THE TEACHER PREPARATION PATHWAY;

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

3 **3. ANY LEGISLATIVE OR REGULATORY CHANGES**
4 **NECESSARY FOR SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TEACHER PREPARATION**
5 **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.

18 (2) “Dually enrolled student” includes a student enrolled in a credit or
19 noncredit certificate or license program, course, or sequence of courses that leads to
20 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.