



## CALVERT COUNTY BRANCH 7011

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Senate Bill 254  
College of Southern Maryland  
Charles County Campus Transition to Charles Community College  
Unfavorable Report  
February 4, 2022

I am writing to oppose Senate Bill 254 – College of Southern Maryland – Vice President of Equity and Inclusion- Funding and Responsibilities for two reasons: it is an unfunded and unjustified mandate and it completely disregards the current equity and inclusion work at the college.

The College of Southern Maryland (CSM) is nationally recognized by the Aspen Institute for achieving outcomes, including equity outcomes, and by Diverse Issues in Higher Education for high numbers of minority graduates, especially in STEM fields. The college has been part of the Achieving the Dream network since 2019, a national organization of roughly 300 community colleges, that has as its primary focus the elimination of equity gaps among community college students.

The President's Cabinet is a talent diverse group of individuals, who ensure that the Board of Trustees' strategic goal "to ensure equity in all programs and services" permeates all aspects of the college.

The entire college is committed to equity, monitors and reports progress on a DEI Dashboard on the college website. An Equity and Inclusion Council is part of our participatory governance system, which has representatives from every constituency across the college. Among their charges is ensuring administrative policies are equitable. The specifics of SB 254 impose a structure that is oppositional to our current and well-recognized equity work. It also detract from the college's current hiring priorities, which include full-time faculty and academic advisors.

SB 254 is an unfunded mandate in excess of \$600,000. It s a violation of the accreditation standards set by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education which requires the Board of Trustees to be free of outside influence, including political interference. SB 254 would put into law a mandate to hire specific employees, which undermines the fiduciary responsibility of the Board of Trustees to set budgets and institutional priorities.



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I ask the Senate Education, Health, and environmental Affairs Committee to give SB 254 an unfavorable report.

Respectfully,

Michael G. Kent  
President

**CSM Statement:**

“We do not support dismantling the College of Southern Maryland for a number of reasons. CSM mirrors Southern Maryland’s identity and we strive always to prepare our students for this region’s workforce, and to help them have a better quality of life. We don’t see county boundaries when it comes to our transformative work or our commitment to helping students succeed. Like everyone else, we were blindsided by Sen. Ellis’ introduction of SB136.

We believe Sen. Ellis has some fundamental misunderstanding about the operations of the College of Southern Maryland. For starters, CSM – like every college in the state – has been mitigating the pandemic for nearly two years, going into a third year, and that context is not reflected in anything he is currently saying about the college.

The senator’s position that CSM has taken away STEM programs from Charles County is simply not true. You can get the full gambit of STEM programming as a Charles County student. In addition, and despite the pandemic, we were able to stand up a new charter of the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) in December of 2020 and a new Society of Women Engineers club in January of 2021 – and both programs are being celebrated by elected officials with proclamations again this year during National Engineer’s Week Feb. 20. CSM is also proud to provide a financial way forward for students seeking careers in STEM fields thanks to a \$953,243 award from the National Science Foundation’s (NSF) Scholarships in STEM (S-STEM) program, and a second NSF grant for \$257,912 to help students pursue degrees in cybersecurity.

As far as the senator’s claim that CSM is taking away physical facilities including the La Plata campus pool and the Children’s Learning Center (CLC) here are the facts:

- Our La Plata Campus’ 48-year-old Physical Education Building was closed when the campus went into remote operations in March 2020 – a moment that turned into a silver-lining that allowed CSM to address significant repairs to the facility. The earliest we could reopen the building is the fall of 2022. That said, we are in discussions with Charles County Government about the future of the pool in that building – a potential collaboration the senator would have known about had he asked us.
- The CLC too, was closed when the campus went into remote operations, along with the rest of the campus buildings. At that time, five of the children in the center were children of students; four were children of employees. And as with the pool, we are exploring several partnership opportunities for that facility to better serve our students as we emerge from the pandemic.

The college’s commitment to diversity, equity and inclusivity is unsurpassed and permeates throughout our communities. CSM adding 7-week class schedules alongside the 15-week class schedule is part of our commitment to equity. We scaled 7-week courses to better serve students who don’t have the privilege to attend full-time for two semesters, and in doing so, we opened the door for rolling admission and completion.

We are recognized nationally for the good work we have done at the College of Southern Maryland. As always, CSM is happy to discuss the work of the college and welcomes a conversation with Sen. Ellis to further his understanding of our good work. In fact, we respectfully ask for Sen. Ellis to come to the table with us and other regional officials to work together for all CSM students.

**Other answers/facts:**

*Economic Impact:*

Each year, the economic contribution of the College of Southern Maryland supports more than 4,200 jobs. That translates into earnings that impact 1 in every 39 people who work in Southern Maryland. CSM adds more than \$250 million in added income to our region each year and more than \$196 million of that comes from our alumni. Having separate colleges would limit our students' opportunities; create unneeded chaos for our most vulnerable students who are already struggling in this pandemic; and be fiscally irresponsible – resulting in financial burdens that would transfer to our students, and every taxpayer.

*Current (Feb.1, 2022) student totals:*

Total number students: 4,729

From Calvert: 1,137

From Charles: 1,891

From St. Mary's: 1,411

Other: 290

*History:*

CSM's story began in 1958 when the Charles County Community College was established as part of the continuing expansion of the community college in America. At its inception in 1958, the college was governed by the Charles County Board of Education, with the first classes conducted at La Plata High School in the evenings. The Friendly Hall Campus, which is now the La Plata Campus, was established in 1968. The college expanded its services to St. Mary's County in 1978 and Calvert County in 1980.

On July 1, 2000, the college officially became the College of Southern Maryland (CSM), a regional college serving Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's counties. Today, College of Southern Maryland is known as a progressive, innovative, and technologically-advanced institution with campuses in each county and the additional of the Hughesville Regional Campus which includes the Center for Trades and Energy Training and coming this year the Center for Health Sciences. In addition, the college oversees the Velocity Center (innovation hub) in Indian Head and the Center for Transportation Training (CDL training) in La Plata. As a regionally-accredited institution that prides itself on delivering high quality educational services, it also serves as a catalyst for business, industry, and government to identify the resources needed to grow and maintain a healthy economy and community.