



**Dr. Falecia D. Williams**  
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February 17, 2023

Cynthia S. Bambara  
President  
Allegany College of Maryland  
12401 Willowbrook Road, SE  
Cumberland, MD 21502

Dear Dr. Bambara,

I am writing on behalf of the Pathways in Technology Early College High School (P-TECH) Program at Prince George's Community College (PGCC) to support the Western Maryland Delegation's proposed amendments to SB319 passed in 2017. PGCC is fortunate to participate in this innovative P-TECH high school program which blends high school and college classes to enable students to earn both an Associate Degree and a high school diploma upon completion. While students at PGCC complete the P-TECH program in four years, earning both degrees upon high school graduation, we recognize that the Maryland Community Colleges with programs that extend to years five and six face some unique obstacles that have occurred or will occur in the years ahead. This letter is in support of the legislative request that is being made by the Western Maryland Delegation to ensure that these obstacles are removed and that students are given every opportunity to be successful.

Specifically, P-TECH students in Maryland Community Colleges with programs that extend to a fifth or sixth year, face several barriers as they become full time college students, but do not technically have a completed high school diploma. These P-TECH students are not considered to have completed the P-TECH program until they have earned the college-level Associate's degree. In some cases, it may take students up to six years to complete the Associate's degree requirements. For students who need additional time to earn the Associate's degree, the high school diploma is kept "on file" with the public-school system, per a requirement of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), until the Associate's degree has been earned. When students meet the P-TECH program requirements by earning the Associate's degree and the high school diploma, they are awarded both.

These current guidelines can negatively impact student participants in the following ways:

- a. Federal Financial Aid: Participants are ineligible for federal aid, specifically Pell Grants, because they do not have a high school diploma. A transcript or letter stating they have met the requirements to graduate is not acceptable.

Students who take extra courses beyond the P-TECH pathway are not provided funding which negatively impacts their educational growth and development.

- b. College Athletics: Students must meet a minimum number of credit hours to participate. As mentioned above, students are unable to receive federal aid to take classes beyond their P-TECH pathway to increase the number of credits per semester.
- c. Driver's License: Many P-TECH students do not obtain their learners' permit until they turn 18. Without their diploma, they have to wait 9 months to obtain the Provisional License and extended probationary period, which causes transportation issues once they are out of high school and transporting themselves to our campus.

This letter serves as support of legislative revisions related to the practice of keeping the diploma "on file" for P-TECH students for the reasons outlined above. This legislation would ensure that P-TECH funding will continue until the Associate Degree is completed, but allow high schools to release the diplomas to these students upon actual high school graduation. This legislation would eliminate all of the barriers mentioned above.

Thank you for the opportunity to advocate for this legislative revision. Please let me know if you would like to discuss this further. I look forward to your response to this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Falecia D. Williams". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Falecia D. Williams, Ed.D.