ACPS
ALLEGANY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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House Ways and Means Committee

TESTIMONY

Submitted by
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Allegany County Public Schools

February 22, 2023

BILL: HB0689 - Pathways in Technology Early College High (P–TECH) School Program – High School Diplomas

POSITION: FAVORABLE

On behalf of Allegany Allegany County Public Schools, I am pleased to offer our complete support of HB0689, "Pathways in Technology Early College High (P–TECH) School Program – High School Diplomas".

As you may already know, the P-TECH program is a high school and beyond (9-14) model, which combines high school, college, and the world of work, with the ultimate goal of earning their Associate Degree. Each P-TECH school in Maryland has a different focus in Allegany County our students earn their AA degree in Computer Technology Concentration in Cyber Security from Allegany College of Maryland.

Our students have the option of completing the program in 4, 5 or 6 years. In our first two cohort of students we had students complete the program earning their AA degree in May of 2021, May of 2022. This year we will have students from the first three cohorts earning their AA degree. We are proud of our students. They not only completed the program earning their degree they also leaders, athletes and participated in extracurricular activities in both high school and college.

The P-TECH program uses a variety of ways to earn college credits while in high school such as; transcripted credits for completing industry certifications, Career Technical Education programs and dual enrollment early college classes. Due to taking advantage of all these options in high school our students do not need to carry a full time college schedule when in years 5 and 6 at the college.

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Currently our students high school diploma is held until they finish the P-TECH program earning their AA degree. While all of our students have finished their high school requirements at the end of year four we continue to hold their diploma until year 5 or 6 when they complete their AA degree. Over the last 2 years of our students participating in year 5 and 6 we have discovered unforeseen obstacles.

These current guidelines can negatively impact P-TECH participants in the following ways:

a. <u>Federal Financial Aid:</u> 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. <u>College Athletics:</u> Students must meet a minimum number of credit hours to participate. Students are unable to receive federal aid to take classes beyond their P-TECH pathway.

c. <u>Driver's License:</u> Many P-TECH students do not obtain their learners permit until they turn 18. Without a diploma, they have to wait 9 months to obtain the Provisional License and extended probationary period causes transportation issues once they are out of high school and transporting themselves to campus.

This legislative change would allow P-TECH participants to receive their high school diploma following completion of all high school graduation requirements. Without this change, we anticipate additional road blocks for P-TECH students who do not have access to their diploma as the program continues to grow and expand in our county and across the State. For example, I have had students working for Walmart and various other local employers who have offered working students who can prove their high school graduation extra money per hour or a promotion to a higher pay position. We offer a minimum of 50% of our seats in our program to students who earn free and reduced meals. I also have students who do not live with their parents. These families and students should not have to pay out of pocket to take extra classes to become better leaders or to participate in sports, require extra time on their provisional license or be denied a better job because they are completing the P-TECH program.

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Thank you for the opportunity to advocate for this legislative revision to remove this barrier and provide students every opportunity to be successful.

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