

**Senate Bill 81
Kee Abell, Trustee, Board of Trustees, College of Southern Maryland
Unfavorable Report**

January 24, 2024

I am Kee Abell and as a Trustee for the College of Southern Maryland, I request an Unfavorable Report for SB 81 – Higher Education – College of Southern Maryland – Budget.

The College of Southern Maryland is the workforce pipeline for all of Southern Maryland and employers welcome qualified graduates from all three counties. Like the college has a footprint in each of our three counties as well as a much larger virtual presence, our workforce partners similarly hold a regional perspective. In fact, the college held a community convening in September and we received overwhelming feedback from our region’s partners in the nonprofit, military, healthcare, and economic development fields that CSM must approach our programming from a regional perspective and that the college be the hub of workforce development in Southern Maryland.

Today, CSM responds nimbly to our students and their needs. We know our students are mobile, and because of our strategic locations throughout Southern Maryland, students who work in one county and live in another can choose the location that best serves them. For instance, we have St. Mary’s County residents who are learning at Charles and Calvert County campuses and virtually – and who may very well go to work in Charles County. CSM truly reflects the regional concept.

Speaking of the virtual campus, the college has 11 online programs of study and more than 26,000 enrollments just in online courses. In fact, Intelligent.com rankings once again includes CSM among the “Best Community Colleges in Maryland,” and the nation’s “Best Online Associate in Information Technology and Systems Degree Programs” for 2024. This tremendous growth of our online classes has been possible due to the ability to assign resources and costs to a virtual campus that is tied to all three counties.

As of Fiscal Year 23, almost 45 percent of CSM students attend two or more campus locations across the three counties and another 32 percent take online classes. There is tremendous growth in online education. And as notably demonstrated during the pandemic, there are no county boundaries in the virtual classroom. The ability to allocate resources based on student’s needs and where they are ultimately benefits all students.

As Trustees, the nine of us represent our counties equally, and we are committed to support each location equitably according to their unique needs and student population.

As a regional college operating as one college, CSM can best serve our 14,329 students and their success fairly, strategically, and equitably regardless of their campus location.

For these reasons, I ask the committee's unfavorable report to SB 81. Thank you.

Kee Abell, Trustee
Board of Trustees, College of Southern Maryland