
House Appropriations Committee
March 31, 2026

SB 509 - Higher Education - Workforce Pell Grant Program - Implementation

Position: Favorable with Amendments

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC), representing Maryland's 16 community colleges, supports **SB 509** with amendments. Community colleges have long been leaders in workforce education and training. Across Maryland, community colleges partner closely with employers, labor organizations, and workforce development entities to deliver short-term training programs that help Marylanders gain the skills needed to enter high-demand careers. Expanding access to federal Pell Grants for high-quality short-term workforce programs represents an important opportunity to broaden access to these pathways for students who may not otherwise be able to afford them.

Many students pursuing workforce training are working adults, career changers, or individuals seeking to quickly enter or reenter the labor market. Workforce Pell has the potential to expand access to programs that lead to recognized industry credentials, registered apprenticeships, and stackable pathways that allow students to continue their education over time. Community colleges strongly support efforts to ensure that students have access to financial aid for these types of programs, particularly when they are aligned with in-demand industries and lead to meaningful career opportunities.

MACC appreciates the amendments adopted to SB 509, which strengthen provisions related to program quality, accountability, and alignment with workforce needs. Requirements related to completion rates, job placement outcomes, and alignment with high-skill, high-wage occupations reflect an important commitment to ensuring that Workforce Pell-supported programs provide real economic value to students.

At the same time, community colleges remain concerned that implementation of this framework may be premature, given the evolving federal guidance and the operational complexity of administering Workforce Pell at the State level. Institutions will need time to align programs, ensure compliance with both federal and State requirements, and build the necessary administrative and reporting infrastructure.

Additionally, several provisions in the bill may create challenges for community colleges as they seek to develop and offer short-term programs. Requirements related to program approval,

performance thresholds, and operational limitations may not fully reflect how community colleges design and deliver workforce training—particularly in noncredit programs and rapidly evolving fields. Ensuring that Workforce Pell complements, rather than constrains, existing workforce partnerships and training models will be critical to successful implementation.

Community colleges work closely with employers, labor organizations, and workforce partners to deliver a wide range of training opportunities, including registered apprenticeships, related technical instruction, and employer-driven contract training programs. As Maryland moves forward, it will be important to ensure that Workforce Pell aligns with and supports these existing efforts. MACC appreciates the sponsor’s recognition of the role of apprenticeships and looks forward to continuing to work with the General Assembly, the Moore Administration, the Maryland Higher Education Commission, the Department of Labor, and other stakeholders to ensure that Workforce Pell is implemented in a way that expands access while maintaining flexibility and strong workforce alignment. Accordingly, MACC urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report on **SB 509 with AMENDMENTS**.

Please contact Brad Phillips (bphillips@mdacc.org) or Drew Jabin (djabin@mdacc.org) with questions.