
TO: House Ways and Means Committee
BILL: Senate Bill 478 – Washington County – Institutions of Higher Education – Dually Enrolled Students
DATE: March 10, 2026
POSITION: Opposition

The Maryland State Board and Education (State Board) and State Department of Education (MSDE) respectfully oppose Senate Bill 478, which expands the definition of “dually enrolled student” in Washington County to include nonpublic secondary school and homeschool students, making them eligible to apply for the Part-Time Grant Program and the Early College Access Grant.

MSDE strongly believes that dual enrollment programs play a critical role in helping students accelerate their progress toward postsecondary education and careers. These programs align closely with the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future, particularly Pillar 3: College and Career Readiness, which seeks to ensure that all Maryland students graduate prepared for both postsecondary education and the workforce.

However, SB0478 introduces a county-specific statutory modification to a program operating within a statewide framework, raising concerns about program consistency, funding, and equitable access. Establishing localized statutory exceptions may lead to uneven access to dual enrollment opportunities for students across Maryland and create disparities in how programs are implemented across different counties.

The bill also raises important fiscal considerations for local education agencies (LEAs) and institutions of higher education. While MSDE does not incur direct fiscal impact from the bill, the proposed expansion would shift financial and administrative responsibilities to LEAs and higher education partners. Under current law and existing grant structures, LEAs are responsible for certain dual enrollment tuition and associated program costs. Expanding eligibility to additional student populations without a corresponding funding mechanism may increase participation and place additional financial pressure on local school systems and their postsecondary partners.

Additionally, the proposed expansion may introduce administrative and operational challenges for LEAs and colleges. Local systems may be required to verify eligibility for additional students, coordinate enrollment and advising processes, and manage expanded reporting requirements. Increased participation may also require additional counseling and administrative support to ensure students are appropriately enrolled and advised.

Finally, SB0478 raises equity considerations. While expanding access to dual enrollment is an important objective, doing so in a manner limited to a single county may create disparities in opportunity for students depending on where they reside in the State. Without a coordinated statewide approach and sustainable funding structure, expansion in one county could strain local resources and potentially reduce the level of support available to students currently participating in dual enrollment programs.

MSDE notes that if dual enrollment eligibility were to be expanded, a uniform statewide policy approach, with clear funding mechanisms, definitions, and implementation guidance, would be necessary to support consistent implementation and access across the State.

The State Board and the Department respectfully request that the Committee consider this information in their deliberation of **SB0478**. For further information, please contact Laurel Cratsley, Interim Executive Director of Government Affairs, at 443-571-5461 or Laurel.Cratsley@maryland.gov.