
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
March 11, 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. SB 509 includes provisions intended to ensure that Workforce Pell programs meet strong quality standards, including requirements related to completion rates, job placement outcomes, and alignment with high-skill, high-wage occupations. These safeguards are important to ensuring that students enroll in programs that provide real economic opportunity and long-term career value.

As Maryland moves to implement Workforce Pell, it will be important to ensure that the program is coordinated thoughtfully with the State's broader workforce development system. Community colleges, labor organizations, and workforce partners already operate a wide range of successful training initiatives, including registered apprenticeships, related technical instruction, and employer-driven contract training programs.

Ensuring that Workforce Pell complements these existing partnerships will help strengthen Maryland's workforce development ecosystem and expand opportunities for both students and employers. This alignment is currently taking place. Because of the timing, specific amendments are

challenging. In this regard, we commend the sponsor for making certain legislation allows an opportunity for apprenticeships to be included. MACC also would like to make certain that other training opportunities are aligned as well, such as the hundreds of contract training programs provided by community colleges. MACC looks forward to continuing to work with the sponsor, the Maryland Higher Education Commission, the Department of Labor, and other partners to ensure that Workforce Pell is implemented in a way that expands access to high-quality training while maintaining strong workforce alignment across the State. 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.