

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Senate Bill 529: Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program and Program Workgroup

March 4, 2026

Favorable

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 529, which establishes an Early College Teacher Pathway in Southern Maryland.

In this testimony, I am to offer expertise from three sources. As a Lecturer at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, I write and teach on Early College and Dual Enrollment. As Chair of the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, I have helped initiate and lead an Early College Initiative that has grown to serving more than 10,000 students. And lastly, I have had the honor of serving on the nonprofit team that has partnered with the University System of Maryland to analyze the landscape of Early College in Maryland.

Across the country, more than 2.8 million high school students took college courses in the 2023-2024 school year. Participation has grown roughly tenfold over the past two decades. Dually enrolled High school students now comprise 22% of all community college students and 7% of all 4-year college students in the country.

Many of these students take so-called “a la carte” dual enrollment, made up of one or two courses from their local college, often with little advising. Others participate in structured, supported pathways—often targeted to underserved students— that enable them to make substantial progress toward a credential or degree while in high school. We call these programs Early College pathways.

Early College programs are among the interventions most proven to improve postsecondary outcomes. In lottery-based evaluations, meeting the Gold Standard bar for evidence, students who participated in Early Colleges are more likely, than those who wanted to attend but lost the lottery, to enroll in and complete a college degree. They finish far more quickly because they start with a year or two of college under their belts, making college more affordable for them and their families.

States and districts around the country have capitalized on these benefits. There are over 1,200 Early College High Schools in the nationwide database, with states from Texas and North Carolina to Massachusetts and New York investing significant resources. Our Governor in Massachusetts, for example, just pledged in her State of the Commonwealth speech, to grow Early College by 10-fold over the next decade.

Importantly, Early College pathways can be harnessed to meet specific priorities and needs in states. With a nationwide teacher shortage and rising costs of becoming a teacher, teacher preparation pathways are emerging as a leading use case for Early College. In fact, New York's Governor Hochul just included \$2 Million in Early College teacher preparation in her newly proposed budget.

Maryland has significant assets that it can leverage to take advantage of this Early College opportunity. The Blueprint for Maryland's Future is among the country's most ambitious commitments to offering high school students postsecondary opportunities. And the state has promising proofpoints to which it can look for inspiration and evidence of the Early College model's viability, including Montgomery College's Early College, the Academy of Health Sciences in Prince George's County, and Baltimore's Bard Early College High School.

Despite these assets, Maryland ranks below almost every state on several measures of Dual Enrollment participation. Meanwhile, low-income students and students of color– the very groups Early College helps the most– are underrepresented in Maryland's dual enrollment population.

By establishing the pilot proposed in SB 529, Maryland can leverage the power of Early College for its students while accelerating the teacher pipeline in an area of your state with a pressing need for more teachers. This pilot can serve as a scalable model for teacher preparation pathways in other regions of the state and for other high-need fields such as nursing or cybersecurity.

I respectfully request a favorable report on SB 529.

Sincerely,

Chris Gabrieli