

SB529_ Written Testimony_ Chris Gabrieli.pdf

Uploaded by: Christopher Gabrieli

Position: FAV

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

SB529_TeacherPathways_KennedyKrieger_SUPPORT.pdf

Uploaded by: Emily Arneson

Position: FAV



DATE: March 4, 2026 COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment
BILL NO: Senate Bill 529
BILL TITLE: Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program and Program Workgroup - Establishment
POSITION: Support

Kennedy Krieger Institute supports Senate Bill 529 - Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program and Program Workgroup – Establishment.

Bill Summary:

Senate Bill 529 establishes the Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway program with the purpose of creating a structured, credit-bearing pathway for high school students to begin preparation to teach primary and secondary education.

Background:

Kennedy Krieger Institute is dedicated to improving the lives of children and young adults with developmental, behavioral, cognitive and physical challenges. Kennedy Krieger’s services include inpatient, outpatient, school-based and community-based programs.

Kennedy Krieger is proud to serve as an extension of Maryland’s public school system with five non-public schools, currently serving nearly 500 publicly funded public-school students with complex intellectual and developmental disabilities from over half of the school districts in Maryland. All students in Kennedy Krieger schools are placed by their local education agencies and paid for through a combination of state and local funds. Private tuition is not accepted.

One of our schools is in St. Mary’s County serving jurisdictions in Southern Maryland. Now in its third school year, having opened in September of 2023, the school serves 25 students, with the planned census growth reaching 45 students shortly. With that growth, we will be recruiting for additional licensed special education teachers.

Rationale:

Supporting a credit-bearing pathway for high school students to begin preparation for teaching in primary and secondary education can be a powerful strategy for addressing long-standing workforce needs in rural communities. Early exposure to teaching coursework helps students clarify career interests, build foundational skills, and earn college credit, lowering both the time and cost required to enter the profession.

Such pathways also strengthen rural schools by creating a sustainable, homegrown teacher pipeline. Districts in rural areas often face chronic teacher shortages, high turnover, and limited recruitment reach.

By investing in credit-bearing programs at the high school level, education systems can simultaneously support students’ career development and improve educational stability and quality in rural schools.

Kennedy Krieger requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 529.

3.4_SB 529 - Southern Maryland Early College Pathw

Uploaded by: Gail Sunderman

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE**

**SB529 –Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program and Program
Workgroup—Establishment**

POSITION: Favorable

BY: Linda Kohn, President

DATE: March 4, 2026

The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) is a nonpartisan organization that believes that is the responsibility of government to provide equality of opportunity for education for all students. Accordingly, the League supports Senate Bill 529 – Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program and Program Workgroup –Establishment.

Senate Bill 529, cross filed with HB479, directs the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), in consultation with the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), to implement and administer the Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program. It also requires the University System of Maryland (USM) to work with both agencies to develop the corresponding teacher preparation pathway. The bill establishes the Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathways Program Workgroup to coordinate these efforts. This is a pilot program for Southern Maryland, one that aims to serve as a model for state-wide regional replication.

Maryland faces a persistent teacher shortage, particularly in rural southern counties. Students in this region often face financial and structural barriers that prevent attendance in teacher preparation programs. To address these obstacles, the state's dual enrollment framework allows high school students to enroll simultaneously in a state higher education institution without charge for tuition and fees. These measures, established by the College Completion Act of 2013, were expanded by the Blueprint for Maryland' Future's College and Career Readiness (CCR) standards. The dual enrollment options have resulted in increased enrollment rates. However, Maryland still trails other states, ranking 45th in the nation for dual enrollment as a percentage of total undergraduate enrollment.¹

Senate Bill 529 strengthens and expands educational and career-related opportunities by initiating a program for training new teachers through an early college dual enrollment program. In a structured partnership between the state's high schools and higher education institutions, students are provided with aligned, sequenced, degree-bearing pathways designed to provide a

¹ Empower Schools University of Maryland System. The Evidence and Opportunity of Early College Pathways; A Review of Existing Literature on Early College. Available from Director, Early College Education, USM.

seamless transition from high school to college. Multiple research studies demonstrate that early college programs boost postsecondary enrollment, completion, and speed to credential.²

In particular, SB529 offers a proven path for providing Maryland's rural and other underserved students with access to credit-bearing programs that will prepare them for teaching positions. The bill diminishes barriers for students, including cost and distance, to promote equality of opportunity. It strengthens the teacher preparation pipeline in alignment with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future.

For these reasons, LWVMD recommends a **favorable report** on SB579.

²Song, M., Zeiser, K., Atchison, D., & Brodziak de los Reyes, I. (2021). Early college, continued success: Longer-term impact of Early College High Schools. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 14(1), 116–142.
<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1293552>

Early College & TAM Testimony - Riley Day.pdf

Uploaded by: James Smith

Position: FAV

My name is Riley Day, and I am a senior at Leonardtown High School. I am a Directed Study student in the Teacher Academy of Maryland, and I am dual-enrolled at the College of Southern Maryland through the Early College AAT program. I am writing this letter to share my experiences in these programs and explain how they have impacted my personal, professional, and academic dedication to becoming an educator in the state of Maryland.

As a Directed Study student through TAM, I have been given access to early experience in education courses and internships. Through coursework, classroom observations, conferences, and teaching placements, I have gained insight into what it truly means to teach students. I have been able to see the rewards of supporting students, but also the responsibility, preparation, and dedication the profession requires. TAM has given me the opportunity to spend 700+ hours interning in elementary school classrooms during the past two years. These experiences continue to affirm my desire to pursue a career in education and serve my community as a future teacher.

As I entered my third year of TAM, the Early College program at the College of Southern Maryland was piloted. This Early College pathway has given me the opportunity to begin my associate's degree as a senior in high school. Currently, I take four classes per semester, followed by an internship five days a week at Benjamin Banneker Elementary School in a third-grade classroom. Taking college-level courses while still in high school challenges me academically and teaches me invaluable skills that I will take with me into my future career as an educator. I have learned the importance of time management, self-advocacy, and critical thinking. Earning college credit early has also reduced the financial burden of higher education for my family and made college feel both accessible and achievable.

The combination of the Teacher Academy of Maryland and Early College has provided me with a clear, structured pathway as I intend to transfer to the University of Maryland or Towson University next year to pursue a degree in Elementary Education. This program has not only prepared me for college, but it has also prepared me as a future educator who is already invested in Maryland's schools and communities. I have been given the wonderful opportunity to take college courses at a discounted price, some of which are paid for by SMCPS, while maintaining access to school-sponsored clubs, competitions, and events. Although I am a student at CSM, I am able to participate in SkillsUSA regional and state competitions for Early Childhood Education alongside other high school students. I am able to make connections within my community, especially within my internship placement schools, while maintaining relationships with peers and teachers at Leonardtown High School.

I respectfully urge you to continue supporting and investing in programs like the Teacher Academy of Maryland and other partnerships with institutions such as the College of Southern Maryland. My experience with these programs in action is proof that these initiatives work. These initiatives support students early, enabling Maryland schools to grow and support future educators who understand the needs and values of our local classrooms. Initiatives like the Early College program reduce barriers to higher education, which could lead to a stronger future for Maryland school systems and educators.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my experiences and for your continued commitment to Maryland's students and educators.

Sincerely,

Riley Day

Lauren Sebring - Testimony in support of HB479 - G

Uploaded by: James Smith

Position: FAV

Lauren Sebring

SMCPS, Leonardtown High School Senior, TAM, Early College AAT

To whom it may concern,

My name is Lauren Sebring. I am a senior at Leonardtown High School and dually enrolled at the College of Southern Maryland. I completed the Teacher Academy (TAM) program last school year and have moved on to the Early College AAT Program this year. I have dreamed of becoming an elementary school teacher for as long as I can remember, from bossing my little brother around in my play schoolhouse to helping struggling classmates. Coming from a private school, high school was quite an adjustment for me. However, I found my place in TAM.

Ms. Chew fostered such an amazing atmosphere and offered us endless opportunities for growth. The first year of TAM was focused on human growth and development, all while completing group projects, building our portfolios, and starting to observe classrooms. The second year of TAM was definitely the highlight of it all. We finally got to start an internship and continued learning how to effectively teach while also strengthening our professional skills. I loved it all, the field trips, the observations, and most of all working with the students in my internship! My self-efficacy grew rapidly as I watched myself make my dreams become a reality. We were given constant feedback and continuously worked collaboratively with our peers to share experiences and teaching strategies that had been working for us. I could easily see the difference I was making, and it empowered me to keep pushing towards getting into the classroom as soon as I could. All of these experiences in TAM, including SkillsUSA, Educator's Rising, and my internship, helped prepare me for what was ahead.

At the end of TAM, we were offered a couple of different options for our senior year if we wanted to continue down a teaching pathway. I chose the Early College AAT pathway for a couple of reasons. Not only did I want to get a headstart on my teaching degree, but I had already planned to stay close to home to get my elementary education degree, so CSM was a perfect place for me to start. It has allowed me to keep a part-time job at a local construction company while also working at two horse farms in the evenings. Doing this has not only given me a head start on my degree, but it has also given me a way to start earning money for my future. SMCPS also pays for two classes a semester and provides a 25% discount on the other two classes, as I am recognized as college and career ready, which is also a wonderful help!

Early College has been an amazing experience thus far. They have a variety of tutoring services available at all times, caring professors, and small class sizes. All of these

benefits have helped make it feel so valuable in improving my college readiness. With smaller class sizes, we are able to get to know our professors and build rapport with them while also receiving a more personalized education, similar to the high school setting, which has kept it from being overwhelming. At the same time, I have improved my time management skills, all while learning to balance life and my other responsibilities outside of school. These classes have not only allowed me to understand what college will be like, but the few teaching-based classes we have taken have really enhanced my desire to become a teacher. This opportunity has been amazing, and I am so thankful that I have gotten to be a part of it.

All of these educational opportunities fostered through TAM and Early College have provided a direct path for my future teaching degree. I have always planned to stay close to home by completing my associates at CSM and then finishing my bachelor's degree through Towson's Satellite campus. The opportunity for a local four-year degree is very enticing to me as I want to start teaching as soon as I can, but I also want to stay close to home while getting my degree. I plan to stay and teach in St. Mary's County, so possibly being able to do my practicum and field experiences in St. Mary's County schools would be an amazing way to get my foot in the door.

For me and many others, staying close to home is such a great way to save money while having a more flexible schedule. Having such a close commute to college is wonderful for many reasons. It allows you to keep your personal responsibilities while also saving money yet again. There are endless benefits within community college and a local four-year degree, and I hope to be a part of that. Being able to enter any workforce with financial stability, a support system close by, and community connections is so valuable. It makes the transition so much easier, and that is what I have always hoped to experience. As a pretty hardworking person, I feel that college is what you make of it, and as long as you are dedicated and put your best foot forward, success will come your way, no matter where you go or what path you end up choosing.

TAM and Early College have given me and others so many qualities and skills to succeed in our higher education and future classrooms. Although it has all required hard work and time, I feel as if my ability to adjust so easily to a college setting speaks volumes about what I have learned in TAM and my personal work experiences through the years. Life is all about learning, and being able to build my educational career so close to home would be amazing, not only for me but for many others coming behind me as TAM has continued to grow in the past couple of years. Overall, I think that TAM and Early College have not only fueled my passion for teaching but have also offered endless opportunities, making a teaching career much more accessible for myself and others. As I continue working towards my elementary education degree, I hope to watch

these programs blossom and maybe even take part in them. All in all, teaching is the profession that fuels all other professions, so I hope that we as a society can continue to support educators and build strong programs to further educational success everywhere, even close to home.

Sincerely, Lauren Sebring

Testimony .pdf

Uploaded by: James Smith

Position: FAV

SUPERINTENDENT J SCOTT SMITH ORAL TESTIMONY

Good afternoon, I am Scott Smith, Superintendent of St. Mary's County Public Schools. I come before you today to voice support for HB479 from all three Southern Maryland Superintendents, Dr. Navarro in Charles County, and Dr. Newsome in Calvert.

In education, nothing is more valuable, more impactful than the classroom teacher - and we don't have enough. In St. Mary's County, in Calvert, in Charles, we superintendents have come to the unshakable conclusion that the solution to this crisis must come from us - we must grow our own.

We must build a regional, accessible, affordable pathway, free of barriers, that moves our **students today** to become our **teachers tomorrow**.

We also know that locally grown teachers are deeply connected to the community; they know our students, our schools, our staff... and importantly, once they join us, they stay.

In St. Mary's County, we are already taking steps to make this happen. This year, our Teacher Academy of Maryland students, who have completed the program requirements by the end of their junior year, enter "directed study" and can enroll in an Early College Pathway at the College of Southern Maryland. When they finish their senior year, they will have earned 26 college credits and be able to earn an Associate in the Arts of Teaching (AAT) within a year of leaving high school.

They will have an affordable, solid start on their path to the classroom - all while staying in the Southern Maryland region. I urge you to read the testimony submitted by two students in this program, **Riley Day** and **Lauren Sebring**, as their path is what we hope to replicate and expand across our three school systems.

While we can create a pathway to get them to an AAT, we need to work on what comes next. How can we keep them in Southern Maryland when there is no local in-person option to earn their bachelor's degree?

This is where a work group bringing all stakeholders together can create something new, something that harnesses the technology of the 21st-century, without losing the human, in-person, face-to-face community that is the bedrock of education.

I know that with the right people around the table, we can pioneer a local teacher preparation pathway that will be a model for the state.

This is why we support SB529.

SB529_USM_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Jay Perman

Position: FAV

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Senate Bill 529

Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program and Program Workgroup – Establishment

March 4, 2026

Favorable

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, members of the committee, thank you for this chance to testify on Senate Bill 529 establishing the Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program.

The bill directs the Maryland State Department of Education, in consultation with the Maryland Higher Education Commission, to administer and implement the program. It also requires the University System of Maryland (USM) to work with both agencies to develop the program and the corresponding teacher preparation pathway, and establishes the Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program Workgroup to guide and coordinate this effort.

This bill is not about creating another standalone program. It's about deploying the full strength of Maryland's K12 schools, community colleges, and public four-year universities as they work *together* to prepare Maryland's next generation of educators.

Maryland faces a persistent teacher shortage, particularly in rural regions like Southern Maryland. District leaders in Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's counties report ongoing vacancies in core subject areas and difficulty finding educators who reflect and understand the communities they serve.

At the same time, many talented students in these regions face financial and structural barriers to accessing teacher preparation programs. Compounding this challenge, Southern Maryland has few four-year colleges, contributing to a significant workforce drain: Students often leave the region to pursue a teaching degree, but don't return home to teach.

The USM at Southern Maryland, one of the System's three regional higher education centers, is a critical asset in addressing this challenge by bringing the full breadth of USM universities and programs directly to the region. This model is already supporting a limited number of early childhood education pathways. With a more coordinated approach, these efforts can be expanded to meet pressing needs in the secondary education, special education, and ESOL teaching workforce.

Under this bill, high school students will be supported from the start with a clear understanding of how each course fits into a broader credential or degree pathway. For low-income, first-generation, and rural students, this structure is especially critical. It reduces the risk of excess credits, shortens time to degree, lowers college costs, and increases the likelihood that students persist into and through a bachelor's degree program. In doing so, the bill diversifies and strengthens the teacher pipeline in direct alignment with the Blueprint for

Maryland's Future, while promoting regional stability by cultivating educators who have deep roots in their communities and are committed to living, working, and serving there long term.

As a public university system, it's our responsibility to ensure that cost, distance, and complexity are not barriers to opportunity, and certainly not for students who feel called to serve. SB529 holds us to that foundational responsibility.

This bill is designed not only to serve Southern Maryland, but to establish a scalable model for regional implementation statewide. An investment in SB529 enables intentional coordination across K12 systems, community colleges, and four-year universities to build a thoughtful, end-to-end teacher preparation pathway that leverages existing state resources and aligns with Maryland's priorities to expand apprenticeships, meet workforce needs, and address the state's critical teacher shortage.

This targeted investment allows the state to build, evaluate, and refine a model that can be replicated in other regions facing similar challenges and expanded over time through Blueprint funding. SB529 affirms that affordability matters, that early exposure matters, and that intentionally designed pathways can transform individual lives while advancing the public good.

The University System of Maryland strongly supports Senate Bill 529 and urges a Favorable Report.

SB529_College of Southern Maryland Dr Yolanda Wils

Uploaded by: Yolanda Wilson

Position: FAV



Senate Bill 529

Establishing the Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program

Dr. Yolanda Wilson, President, College of Southern Maryland

FAVORABLE

March 4, 2026

Thank you, Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and esteemed members of this committee, for the opportunity to join my colleagues in support of Senate Bill 529, to establish the Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program. My name is Yolanda Wilson, and I am the proud president of the College of Southern Maryland.

It is no secret that Maryland is facing a significant teacher shortage. According to the US Department of Labor, jobs for elementary, middle, and secondary school teachers are expected to grow 11% by 2032. Further, the [Maryland State Department of Education](#) lists STEM among its “critical” subject areas for teacher hiring, citing that “teachers in these fast-paced and leading-edge fields must prepare our students to serve as not only as competitive contributors, but innovators for the knowledge-based economy of the future.”

This demand is even more evident in the Southern Maryland region. Consider St. Mary’s County has one of the highest concentrations of STEM jobs in the nation, with STEM occupations comprising nearly 23% of total employment in the area. The need for skilled STEM teachers to educate our future workforce is never more urgent.

Further exacerbating this is that the traditional pipeline for new teachers has narrowed with fewer college students enrolling in teacher preparation programs, leading to a smaller pool of licensed candidates ready to enter the workforce upon graduation.

With all of this in mind, we stand before you today as partners to work collaboratively – not competitively – in developing a teacher pathway that promotes access, momentum, and mobility for our students.

College of Southern Maryland

8730 Mitchell Rd, PO Box 910, La Plata, MD 20646
301-934-2251 | askme@csm.edu

csm.edu

CSM has invaluable partnerships in dual enrollment and Early College with Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's counties. The programs are expanding access and removing barriers to college even before students graduate high school, saving them both time and money.

Our data shows that students who participate in – and complete – Dual Enrollment and Early College programs are more likely to transfer to two- and four-year institutions, earn degrees faster, and secure higher wages after graduation – especially students from underserved communities.

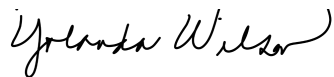
Marrying both the need and the opportunity together, we have partnered with St. Mary's County Public Schools to launch our inaugural cohort of an Associate of Arts in Teaching pathway at the College's Leonardtown Campus.

The missing piece of this puzzle is where students are able to transfer locally to complete their bachelor's degree.

Senate Bill 529's Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway is the missing piece to this puzzle.

By supporting this bill, USMSM will be the delivery point for our students to live, train and remain in Southern Maryland as they complete their bachelor's degrees.

On behalf of the College of Southern Maryland, our partners, our students, and our future teachers, I thank you for your thoughtful consideration.



Yolanda S. Wilson, Ed.D.
President
College of Southern Maryland

SB0529_MACC_FWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Drew Jabin

Position: FWA

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

March 4, 2026

**SB 529 – Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program and Program Workgroup -
Establishment**

Position: Favorable with Amendments

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC), representing Maryland’s 16 community colleges, supports **SB 529** with amendments. Community colleges are the primary providers of dual enrollment and early college instruction across the State and already operate robust, regionally tailored pathways into teaching and other high-need professions, including in Southern Maryland. As such, MACC approaches new early college initiatives with an interest in ensuring alignment with existing community college programs, capacity, and expertise.

SB 529 establishes a new Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program and creates a Program Workgroup tasked with designing and implementing the pathway in coordination with State agencies and higher education partners. While MACC has questions about how this new program will intersect with existing community college-led dual enrollment and teacher preparation efforts, we recognize the interest of regional partners in advancing additional teacher pipeline strategies and understand that this proposal is moving forward.

Given the central role community colleges play in early college delivery, dual enrollment instruction, and teacher pipeline development, MACC believes it is essential that Maryland’s community colleges have formal representation in the development of this program. The bill currently includes representation from a single institution but lacks a statewide community college perspective that reflects broader operational, academic, and policy considerations. Including the MACC Executive Director or the Executive Director’s designee on the Program Workgroup would help ensure coordination, avoid duplication, and strengthen alignment with existing community college programs statewide.

Accordingly, MACC urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report on **SB 529 with AMENDMENTS** to include the MACC Executive Director or the Executive Director’s designee as a member of the Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program Workgroup.

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

SB0529 - State Board & MSDE - SWA.docx (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Richard Kinkaid

Position: FWA

TO: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

BILL: Senate Bill (SB) 529 – Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program and Program Workgroup – Establishment

DATE: March 4, 2026

POSITION: Support with Amendments

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) and the State Department of Education (MSDE) support **Senate Bill 529 – Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program and Program Workgroup – Establishment**, which establishes the Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program and a Program Workgroup.

The proposed bill requires MSDE to administer and implement the Program in consultation with the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), including adopting the necessary regulations. The University System of Maryland (USM) is responsible for developing the Program and the related teacher preparation pathway. Students enrolled in the Program are treated as dual enrollees and cannot be charged fees for participation. Additionally, the bill allocates funds to USM for the development of the Program in Fiscal Years 2028 and 2029.

The State Board and MSDE support SB 529, which aims to strengthen the teacher pipeline in Southern Maryland by expanding early college and career pathways into the teaching profession, specifically in regions with ongoing workforce shortages. We endorse the bill's goal of creating structured, credit-bearing pathways that introduce high school students to teaching careers and align with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. The State Board and MSDE value the emphasis on collaboration between local education agencies (LEAs), higher education institutions, and state partners, as well as the focus on rural and underrepresented students.

MSDE recognizes early college programs as key strategies to boost Maryland's educator workforce. While MSDE supports the effort to expand teacher pathways and dual enrollment opportunities, it is important to note that students in these three LEAs also have access to the Teacher Academy of Maryland (TAM), a CTE program run in partnership with Towson University designed for aspiring educators. As with all proposed initiatives, MSDE seeks to ensure that the early college program offers a distinct, non-duplicative opportunity for students.

Additionally, MSDE emphasizes the importance of a robust planning and implementation process to support the development of a high-quality early college program for aspiring educators. The planning period included in the bill provides an important opportunity for the agencies involved to clearly define roles and responsibilities, allowing each partner to contribute in alignment with its strengths. Meaningful engagement of MSDE, USM, MHEC, and participating LEAs throughout this process will be critical to successful implementation.

In order to implement the program as it is intended, capacity building will be key. MSDE believes that expanding both internal capacity and LEA capacity will be critical to the program's success. The Department's responsibilities under the bill include program management, standards development, regulatory oversight, professional learning, interagency coordination, communications, and data management. We look forward to continued discussions with the sponsors and other partners identified in the legislation to provide clarity regarding MSDE's role and the resources required to administer the program.

Please contact Laurel Cratsley, Interim Executive Director of Government Affairs, at laurel.cratsley@maryland.gov, or Zach Hands, Executive Director of the State Board, at zachary.hands1@maryland.gov.