



House Bill 479

Establishing the Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program

College of Southern Maryland President Dr. Yolanda Wilson

Favorable

Thank you, Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark and esteemed members of this committee. I am grateful for the opportunity to join my colleagues in support of House Bill 479, 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, the demand for K-12 teachers is expected to grow 11% by 2032. Further, the Maryland State Department of Education lists STEM among its “critical” subject areas for teacher hiring.

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, yet the number of STEM teachers in the Southern Maryland region is not keeping pace. The need 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.

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.

CSM has incredibly valuable 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.

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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.

House Bill 479's Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway then is the solution.

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 most of all our future teachers, I thank you for your thoughtful consideration.



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