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**TO:** House Ways and Means Committee

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

**DATE:** April 1, 2026

**POSITION:** Support with Amendments

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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 the University System of Maryland (USM), in consultation with MSDE, the Maryland Higher Education Commission, and other stakeholders, to put forth recommendations for the Program and the related teacher preparation pathway. Additionally, the bill allocates funds to USM for the development of recommendations for the Program in Fiscal Years 2028 and 2029.

The State Board and MSDE support the intention of 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. To strengthen the bill and ensure alignment with existing State priorities, MSDE offers the following recommendations:

- Explicitly state that any recommendations related to teacher preparation, College and Career Readiness, and Career and Technical Education (CTE) align with Pillar 2 and Pillar 3 of the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future.
- Clarify that any recommendations concerning teacher preparation are consistent with existing regulations governing preparation pathways.
- Remove provisions related to recommendations on “regulatory changes” to preserve the discretion of MSDE and the State Board in determining how best to operationalize any resulting recommendations.
- Refine the workgroup’s charge regarding the “use of state funds” to focus specifically on identifying and reporting anticipated local fiscal impacts, including preliminary staffing considerations and cost estimates for local education agencies (LEAs), recognizing that the majority of implementation will occur at the local level.

With these amendments, the State Board and MSDE extend their support for SB 529 and look forward to continued collaboration to increase the number of individuals entering the teaching profession in Maryland. Please contact Laurel Cratsley, Interim Executive Director of Government Affairs, at [laurel.cratsley@maryland.gov](mailto:laurel.cratsley@maryland.gov) with any additional questions.