



**THE SENATE OF MARYLAND**  
**ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401**

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

**Official Testimony of Senator Kevin M. Harris**

Chair Wilkins, Vice-Chair Feldmark, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

This legislation establishes the Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program, a structured, credit bearing pathway that allows high school students to begin preparing for careers as teachers in Maryland's public elementary and secondary schools. This bill addresses a critical gap costing the region both talent and teachers.

In Southern Maryland, students are already stepping forward to become educators. They are participating in Early College, enrolling in the Teacher Academy of Maryland, and earning associate degrees in teaching. But for students who want to pursue bachelor's degrees in high-need fields like secondary education, special education, or ESOL, the pathway stops. These bachelor's degrees are not available locally, so students are forced to leave the region to finish their preparation, and many do not return. This gap directly contributes to teacher shortages and continued reliance on conditionally licensed teachers in our schools.

SB 529 closes this gap by creating intentional, credit-bearing pathways that begin in high school and lead directly to bachelor's degree programs and the teaching profession—particularly for students from rural communities and populations historically underrepresented in postsecondary education.

This legislation takes a strategy-rich approach by aligning existing systems and resources across K–12 education, community colleges, universities, teacher preparation programs, and the Blueprint's workforce goals into a single, coherent pathway with defined outcomes. In doing so, it strengthens and preserves the intent of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future by expanding access, affordability, and opportunity for students. Beginning in Southern Maryland, the bill leverages the power of regional solutions while creating a model that can be evaluated and scaled statewide.

The program will be developed through collaboration among the Maryland State Department of Education, the Maryland Higher Education Commission, and the University System of Maryland, and supported by a Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program Workgroup to ensure coordinated planning, regional input, and thoughtful implementation.

SB 529 is a forward-looking investment in students, educators, and Maryland's public schools. It removes financial barriers, supports early preparation for the teaching profession, and helps build a stronger, more sustainable educator workforce. For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report. Thank you for your consideration.