



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS and MEANS COMMITTEE

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

POSITION: Favorable

BY: Linda Kohn, President

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The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) is a nonpartisan organization that believes that it 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's 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.
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