



Senate Bill 529, Third Reader
Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program Workgroup -
Establishment
Dr. Yolanda Wilson, President, College of Southern Maryland

FAVORABLE

March 30, 2026

Thank you, Chair Wilkins, and esteemed members of the Ways and Means committee, for the opportunity to join my colleagues in support of Senate Bill 529, to establish the Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program Workgroup. 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 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. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 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.

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CSM has invaluable partnerships in dual enrollment and Early College in place 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.

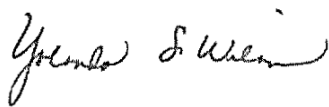
Our data shows that students who participate in – and complete – Dual Enrollment and Early College programs are more likely to transfer to two- and four-year institutions, earn degrees faster, and secure higher wages after graduation – especially students from underserved communities.

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 provides the missing piece to this puzzle in establishing a workgroup to develop the recommendations for a Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway with USMSM as the delivery point for our students to live, train and remain in Southern Maryland as they complete their bachelor's degrees. We support the formation of a workgroup with broad representation to ensure the appropriate partners are engaged for their perspectives to be considered and addressed for successful development and implementation of this pathway.

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



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