



DATE: February 11, 2026 COMMITTEE: House Ways and Means
BILL NO: House Bill 479
BILL TITLE: Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program and Program Workgroup - Establishment
POSITION: Support

Kennedy Krieger Institute supports House Bill 479 - Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program and Program Workgroup – Establishment.

Bill Summary:

House Bill 479 establishes the Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway program with the purpose of creating a structured, credit-bearing pathway for high school students to begin preparation to teach primary and secondary education.

Background:

Kennedy Krieger Institute is dedicated to improving the lives of children and young adults with developmental, behavioral, cognitive and physical challenges. Kennedy Krieger’s services include inpatient, outpatient, school-based and community-based programs.

Kennedy Krieger is proud to serve as an extension of Maryland’s public school system with five non-public schools, currently serving nearly 500 publicly funded public-school students with complex intellectual and developmental disabilities from over half of the school districts in Maryland. All students in Kennedy Krieger schools are placed by their local education agencies and paid for through a combination of state and local funds. Private tuition is not accepted.

One of our schools is in St. Mary’s County serving jurisdictions in Southern Maryland. Now in its third school year, having opened in September of 2023, the school serves 25 students, with the planned census growth reaching 45 students shortly. With that growth, we will be recruiting for additional licensed special education teachers.

Rationale:

Supporting a credit-bearing pathway for high school students to begin preparation for teaching in primary and secondary education can be a powerful strategy for addressing long-standing workforce needs in rural communities. Early exposure to teaching coursework helps students clarify career interests, build foundational skills, and earn college credit, lowering both the time and cost required to enter the profession.

Such pathways also strengthen rural schools by creating a sustainable, homegrown teacher pipeline. Districts in rural areas often face chronic teacher shortages, high turnover, and limited recruitment reach.

By investing in credit-bearing programs at the high school level, education systems can simultaneously support students’ career development and improve educational stability and quality in rural schools.

Kennedy Krieger requests a favorable report on House Bill 479.