

HB479 Written Testimony_ Chris Gabrieli.pdf

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Position: FAV

House Ways and Means Committee

House Bill 479: Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program and Program Workgroup

February 11, 2026

Favorable

Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 479, which establishes an Early College Teacher Pathway in Southern Maryland.

In this testimony, I am to offer expertise from three sources. As a Lecturer at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, I write and teach on Early College and Dual Enrollment. As Chair of the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, I have helped initiate and lead an Early College Initiative that has grown to serving more than 10,000 students. And lastly, I have had the honor of serving on the nonprofit team that has partnered with the University System of Maryland to analyze the landscape of Early College in Maryland.

Across the country, more than 2.8 million high school students took college courses in the 2023-2024 school year. Participation has grown roughly tenfold over the past two decades. Dually enrolled High school students now comprise 22% of all community college students and 7% of all 4-year college students in the country.

Many of these students take so-called “a la carte” dual enrollment, made up of one or two courses from their local college, often with little advising. Others participate in structured, supported pathways—often targeted to underserved students— that enable them to make substantial progress toward a credential or degree while in high school. We call these programs Early College pathways.

Early College programs are among the interventions most proven to improve postsecondary outcomes. In lottery-based evaluations, meeting the Gold Standard bar for evidence, students who participated in Early Colleges are more likely, than those who wanted to attend but lost the lottery, to enroll in and complete a college degree. They finish far more quickly because they start with a year or two of college under their belts, making college more affordable for them and their families.

States and districts around the country have capitalized on these benefits. There are over 1,200 Early College High Schools in the nationwide database, with states from Texas and North Carolina to Massachusetts and New York investing significant resources. Our Governor in Massachusetts, for example, just pledged in her State of the Commonwealth speech, to grow Early College by 10-fold over the next decade.

Importantly, Early College pathways can be harnessed to meet specific priorities and needs in states. With a nationwide teacher shortage and rising costs of becoming a teacher, teacher preparation pathways are emerging as a leading use case for Early College. In fact, New York's Governor Hochul just included \$2 Million in Early College teacher preparation in her newly proposed budget.

Maryland has significant assets that it can leverage to take advantage of this Early College opportunity. The Blueprint for Maryland's Future is among the country's most ambitious commitments to offering high school students postsecondary opportunities. And the state has promising proofpoints to which it can look for inspiration and evidence of the Early College model's viability, including Montgomery College's Early College, the Academy of Health Sciences in Prince George's County, and Baltimore's Bard Early College High School.

Despite these assets, Maryland ranks below almost every state on several measures of Dual Enrollment participation. Meanwhile, low-income students and students of color– the very groups Early College helps the most– are underrepresented in Maryland's dual enrollment population.

By establishing the pilot proposed in HB 479, Maryland can leverage the power of Early College for its students while accelerating the teacher pipeline in an area of your state with a pressing need for more teachers. This pilot can serve as a scalable model for teacher preparation pathways in other regions of the state and for other high-need fields such as nursing or cybersecurity.

I respectfully request a favorable report on HB 479.

Sincerely,

Chris Gabrieli

HB0479 Delegate Patterson Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Edith Patterson

Position: FAV

EDITH J. PATTERSON, ED.D.
Legislative District 28
Charles County

Ways and Means Committee

Subcommittees

Chair, Gaming

K-12 Education

Chair, Southern Maryland
House Delegation



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of HB0479 - Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program and Program Workgroup - Establishment

Good afternoon, Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and members of the Ways and Means Committee. For the record, I am Delegate Edith Patterson, sponsor of House Bill 0479, the Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program and Program Workgroup.

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.

House Bill 0479 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.

HB0479 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.

Edith J. Patterson
Charles County, District 28

HB479_TeacherPathways_KennedyKrieger_SUPPORT.pdf

Uploaded by: Emily Arneson

Position: FAV



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.

Early College & TAM Testimony - Riley Day.pdf

Uploaded by: James Smith

Position: FAV

My name is Riley Day, and I am a senior at Leonardtown High School. I am a Directed Study student in the Teacher Academy of Maryland, and I am dual-enrolled at the College of Southern Maryland through the Early College AAT program. I am writing this letter to share my experiences in these programs and explain how they have impacted my personal, professional, and academic dedication to becoming an educator in the state of Maryland.

As a Directed Study student through TAM, I have been given access to early experience in education courses and internships. Through coursework, classroom observations, conferences, and teaching placements, I have gained insight into what it truly means to teach students. I have been able to see the rewards of supporting students, but also the responsibility, preparation, and dedication the profession requires. TAM has given me the opportunity to spend 700+ hours interning in elementary school classrooms during the past two years. These experiences continue to affirm my desire to pursue a career in education and serve my community as a future teacher.

As I entered my third year of TAM, the Early College program at the College of Southern Maryland was piloted. This Early College pathway has given me the opportunity to begin my associate's degree as a senior in high school. Currently, I take four classes per semester, followed by an internship five days a week at Benjamin Banneker Elementary School in a third-grade classroom. Taking college-level courses while still in high school challenges me academically and teaches me invaluable skills that I will take with me into my future career as an educator. I have learned the importance of time management, self-advocacy, and critical thinking. Earning college credit early has also reduced the financial burden of higher education for my family and made college feel both accessible and achievable.

The combination of the Teacher Academy of Maryland and Early College has provided me with a clear, structured pathway as I intend to transfer to the University of Maryland or Towson University next year to pursue a degree in Elementary Education. This program has not only prepared me for college, but it has also prepared me as a future educator who is already invested in Maryland's schools and communities. I have been given the wonderful opportunity to take college courses at a discounted price, some of which are paid for by SMCPS, while maintaining access to school-sponsored clubs, competitions, and events. Although I am a student at CSM, I am able to participate in SkillsUSA regional and state competitions for Early Childhood Education alongside other high school students. I am able to make connections within my community, especially within my internship placement schools, while maintaining relationships with peers and teachers at Leonardtown High School.

I respectfully urge you to continue supporting and investing in programs like the Teacher Academy of Maryland and other partnerships with institutions such as the College of Southern Maryland. My experience with these programs in action is proof that these initiatives work. These initiatives support students early, enabling Maryland schools to grow and support future educators who understand the needs and values of our local classrooms. Initiatives like the Early College program reduce barriers to higher education, which could lead to a stronger future for Maryland school systems and educators.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my experiences and for your continued commitment to Maryland's students and educators.

Sincerely,

Riley Day

Lauren Sebring - Testimony in support of HB479.pdf

Uploaded by: James Smith

Position: FAV

Lauren Sebring

SMCPS, Leonardtown High School Senior, TAM, Early College AAT

To whom it may concern,

My name is Lauren Sebring. I am a senior at Leonardtown High School and dually enrolled at the College of Southern Maryland. I completed the Teacher Academy (TAM) program last school year and have moved on to the Early College AAT Program this year. I have dreamed of becoming an elementary school teacher for as long as I can remember, from bossing my little brother around in my play schoolhouse to helping struggling classmates. Coming from a private school, high school was quite an adjustment for me. However, I found my place in TAM.

Ms. Chew fostered such an amazing atmosphere and offered us endless opportunities for growth. The first year of TAM was focused on human growth and development, all while completing group projects, building our portfolios, and starting to observe classrooms. The second year of TAM was definitely the highlight of it all. We finally got to start an internship and continued learning how to effectively teach while also strengthening our professional skills. I loved it all, the field trips, the observations, and most of all working with the students in my internship! My self-efficacy grew rapidly as I watched myself make my dreams become a reality. We were given constant feedback and continuously worked collaboratively with our peers to share experiences and teaching strategies that had been working for us. I could easily see the difference I was making, and it empowered me to keep pushing towards getting into the classroom as soon as I could. All of these experiences in TAM, including SkillsUSA, Educator's Rising, and my internship, helped prepare me for what was ahead.

At the end of TAM, we were offered a couple of different options for our senior year if we wanted to continue down a teaching pathway. I chose the Early College AAT pathway for a couple of reasons. Not only did I want to get a headstart on my teaching degree, but I had already planned to stay close to home to get my elementary education degree, so CSM was a perfect place for me to start. It has allowed me to keep a part-time job at a local construction company while also working at two horse farms in the evenings. Doing this has not only given me a head start on my degree, but it has also given me a way to start earning money for my future. SMCPS also pays for two classes a semester and provides a 25% discount on the other two classes, as I am recognized as college and career ready, which is also a wonderful help!

Early College has been an amazing experience thus far. They have a variety of tutoring services available at all times, caring professors, and small class sizes. All of these

benefits have helped make it feel so valuable in improving my college readiness. With smaller class sizes, we are able to get to know our professors and build rapport with them while also receiving a more personalized education, similar to the high school setting, which has kept it from being overwhelming. At the same time, I have improved my time management skills, all while learning to balance life and my other responsibilities outside of school. These classes have not only allowed me to understand what college will be like, but the few teaching-based classes we have taken have really enhanced my desire to become a teacher. This opportunity has been amazing, and I am so thankful that I have gotten to be a part of it.

All of these educational opportunities fostered through TAM and Early College have provided a direct path for my future teaching degree. I have always planned to stay close to home by completing my associates at CSM and then finishing my bachelor's degree through Towson's Satellite campus. The opportunity for a local four-year degree is very enticing to me as I want to start teaching as soon as I can, but I also want to stay close to home while getting my degree. I plan to stay and teach in St. Mary's County, so possibly being able to do my practicum and field experiences in St. Mary's County schools would be an amazing way to get my foot in the door.

For me and many others, staying close to home is such a great way to save money while having a more flexible schedule. Having such a close commute to college is wonderful for many reasons. It allows you to keep your personal responsibilities while also saving money yet again. There are endless benefits within community college and a local four-year degree, and I hope to be a part of that. Being able to enter any workforce with financial stability, a support system close by, and community connections is so valuable. It makes the transition so much easier, and that is what I have always hoped to experience. As a pretty hardworking person, I feel that college is what you make of it, and as long as you are dedicated and put your best foot forward, success will come your way, no matter where you go or what path you end up choosing.

TAM and Early College have given me and others so many qualities and skills to succeed in our higher education and future classrooms. Although it has all required hard work and time, I feel as if my ability to adjust so easily to a college setting speaks volumes about what I have learned in TAM and my personal work experiences through the years. Life is all about learning, and being able to build my educational career so close to home would be amazing, not only for me but for many others coming behind me as TAM has continued to grow in the past couple of years. Overall, I think that TAM and Early College have not only fueled my passion for teaching but have also offered endless opportunities, making a teaching career much more accessible for myself and others. As I continue working towards my elementary education degree, I hope to watch

these programs blossom and maybe even take part in them. All in all, teaching is the profession that fuels all other professions, so I hope that we as a society can continue to support educators and build strong programs to further educational success everywhere, even close to home.

Sincerely, Lauren Sebring

SMCPS Smith HB479.pdf

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Position: FAV

J Scott Smith: written testimony
House Ways and Means Committee

House Bill 479: Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program and Program
Workgroup

February 11, 2026

Favorable

As we are all aware, Maryland is facing a critical shortage of qualified, licensed public school teachers, and traditional models of teacher preparation in Maryland have not been able to meet our needs. To demonstrate this, look no further than the six thousand conditionally licensed teachers leading our classrooms this year. In Southern Maryland alone, we have more than 500 conditional teachers. To become fully licensed, each of these must complete an approved MSDE program while working full-time. It is a daunting undertaking and requires determined persistence to navigate the available virtual programs. As a result, many conditionally licensed teachers are overwhelmed and leave the profession just as they are starting.

We have to change this.

We have come to the unshakable conclusion that we must grow our own. We must inspire our local students and staff to become teachers and then show them how it can be done - affordably, flexibly, and **LOCALLY**.

To this end, we've held a regional [Teacher Preparation Pipeline Summit](#) for the past two years and will do so for a third on April 24, 2026, at the University of Maryland Southern Maryland (USMSM) campus. Great work has come from this collaboration, such as Registered Teacher Apprentices, models for moving para educators to teachers, and in St. Mary's, an Early College Program for our Teacher Academy of Maryland (TAM) students to attend the College of Southern Maryland (CSM) and ultimately earn an Associate's in the Art of Teaching (AAT).

Unfortunately, once students or staff earn their AAT in Southern Maryland, there is no local option for an in-person Bachelor's degree. They must either leave us for a traditional university or enroll in a fully online virtual program. In both cases, we lose connection, and they lose support.

We need to keep our future teachers in Southern Maryland and support them all the way to the classroom. This can only be done by creating something new, something that harnesses the technology of the 21st-century, without losing the human, in-person, face-to-face community that is the bedrock of education.

I know that with the right stakeholders around a table, we can pioneer teacher preparation pathways in Southern Maryland that will become models for the state. For that reason, I support HB 479.

HB479_USM_FAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Jay Perman

Position: FAV

OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

House Bill 479

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

February 11, 2026

Favorable

Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, members of the committee, thank you for this chance to testify on House Bill 479, establishing the Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program.

The bill directs the Maryland State Department of Education, in consultation with the Maryland Higher Education Commission, to administer and implement the program. It also requires the University System of Maryland (USM) to work with both agencies to develop the program and the corresponding teacher preparation pathway, and establishes the Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program Workgroup to guide and coordinate this effort.

This bill is not about creating another standalone program. It's about deploying the full strength of Maryland's K12 schools, community colleges, and public four-year universities as they work *together* to prepare Maryland's next generation of educators.

Maryland faces a persistent teacher shortage, particularly in rural regions like Southern Maryland. District leaders in Calvert, Charles, and St. Mary's counties report ongoing vacancies in core subject areas and difficulty finding educators who reflect and understand the communities they serve.

At the same time, many talented students in these regions face financial and structural barriers to accessing teacher preparation programs. Compounding this challenge, Southern Maryland has few four-year colleges, contributing to a significant workforce drain: Students often leave the region to pursue a teaching degree, but don't return home to teach.

The USM at Southern Maryland, one of the System's three regional higher education centers, is a critical asset in addressing this challenge by bringing the full breadth of USM universities and programs directly to the region. This model is already supporting a limited number of early childhood education pathways. With a more coordinated approach, these efforts can be expanded to meet pressing needs in the secondary education, special education, and ESOL teaching workforce.

Under this bill, high school students will be supported from the start with a clear understanding of how each course fits into a broader credential or degree pathway. For low-income, first-generation, and rural students, this structure is especially critical. It reduces the risk of excess credits, shortens time to degree, lowers college

costs, and increases the likelihood that students persist into and through a bachelor's degree program. In doing so, the bill diversifies and strengthens the teacher pipeline in direct alignment with the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, while promoting regional stability by cultivating educators who have deep roots in their communities and are committed to living, working, and serving there long term.

As a public university system, it's our responsibility to ensure that cost, distance, and complexity are not barriers to opportunity, and certainly not for students who feel called to serve. HB479 holds us to that foundational responsibility.

This bill is designed not only to serve Southern Maryland, but to establish a scalable model for regional implementation statewide. An investment in HB479 enables intentional coordination across K12 systems, community colleges, and four-year universities to build a thoughtful, end-to-end teacher preparation pathway that leverages existing state resources and aligns with Maryland's priorities to expand apprenticeships, meet workforce needs, and address the state's critical teacher shortage.

This targeted investment allows the state to build, evaluate, and refine a model that can be replicated in other regions facing similar challenges and expanded over time through Blueprint funding. HB479 affirms that affordability matters, that early exposure matters, and that intentionally designed pathways can transform individual lives while advancing the public good.

The University System of Maryland strongly supports House Bill 479 and urges a Favorable Report.

HB479_College of Southern Maryland Dr Yolanda Wils

Uploaded by: Yolanda Wilson

Position: FAV



House Bill 479

Establishing the Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program

College of Southern Maryland President Dr. Yolanda Wilson

Favorable

Thank you, Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark and esteemed members of this committee. I am grateful for the opportunity to join my colleagues in support of House Bill 479, to establish the Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program. 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, the demand for K-12 teachers is expected to grow 11% by 2032. Further, the Maryland State Department of Education lists STEM among its “critical” subject areas for teacher hiring.

This demand is even more evident in the Southern Maryland region. Consider 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, yet the number of STEM teachers in the Southern Maryland region is not keeping pace. The need 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.

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.

CSM has incredibly valuable partnerships in dual enrollment and Early College 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.

College of Southern Maryland

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csmd.edu

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.

House Bill 479's Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway then is the solution.

By supporting this bill, USMSM will be the delivery point for our students to live, train and remain in Southern Maryland as they complete their bachelor's degrees.

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



Yolanda S. Wilson, Ed.D.
President
College of Southern Maryland

HB0479 - State Board & MSDE - SWA.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Donna Gunning

Position: FWA

TO: House Ways and Means Committee

BILL: House Bill (HB) 479 – Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program and Program Workgroup – Establishment

DATE: February 11, 2026

POSITION: Support with Amendments

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) and the State Department of Education (MSDE) support **House Bill 479 – 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 MSDE to administer and implement the Program in consultation with the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), including adopting the necessary regulations. The University System of Maryland (USM) is responsible for developing the Program and the related teacher preparation pathway. Students enrolled in the Program are treated as dual enrollees and cannot be charged fees for participation. Additionally, the bill allocates funds to USM for the development of the Program in Fiscal Years 2028 and 2029.

The State Board and MSDE support HB 479, 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. While MSDE supports the effort to expand teacher pathways and dual enrollment opportunities, it is important to note that students in these three LEAs also have access to the Teacher Academy of Maryland (TAM), a CTE program run in partnership with Towson University designed for aspiring educators. As with all proposed initiatives, MSDE seeks to ensure that the early college program offers a distinct, non-duplicative opportunity for students.

Additionally, MSDE emphasizes the importance of a robust planning and implementation process to support the development of a high-quality early college program for aspiring educators. The planning period included in the bill provides an important opportunity for the agencies involved to clearly define roles and responsibilities, allowing each partner to contribute in alignment with its strengths. Meaningful engagement of MSDE, USM, MHEC, and participating LEAs throughout this process will be critical to successful implementation.

In order to implement the program as it is intended, capacity building will be key. MSDE believes that expanding both internal capacity and LEA capacity will be critical to the program's success. The Department's responsibilities under the bill include program management, standards development, regulatory oversight, professional learning, interagency coordination, communications, and data management. We look forward to continued discussions with the sponsors and other partners identified in the legislation to provide clarity regarding MSDE's role and the resources required to administer the program.

Please contact Laurel Cratsley, Interim Executive Director of Government Affairs, at laurel.cratsley@maryland.gov, or Zach Hands, Executive Director of the State Board, at zachary.hands1@maryland.gov.

HB0479_MACC_FWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Drew Jabin

Position: FWA

House Ways and Means Committee

February 11, 2026

**HB 479 – Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program and Program Workgroup -
Establishment**

Position: Favorable with Amendments

The Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC), representing Maryland’s 16 community colleges, supports **HB 479** with amendments. Community colleges are the primary providers of dual enrollment and early college instruction across the State and already operate robust, regionally tailored pathways into teaching and other high-need professions, including in Southern Maryland. As such, MACC approaches new early college initiatives with an interest in ensuring alignment with existing community college programs, capacity, and expertise.

HB 479 establishes a new Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program and creates a Program Workgroup tasked with designing and implementing the pathway in coordination with State agencies and higher education partners. While MACC has questions about how this new program will intersect with existing community college-led dual enrollment and teacher preparation efforts, we recognize the interest of regional partners in advancing additional teacher pipeline strategies and understand that this proposal is moving forward.

Given the central role community colleges play in early college delivery, dual enrollment instruction, and teacher pipeline development, MACC believes it is essential that Maryland’s community colleges have formal representation in the development of this program. The bill currently includes representation from a single institution but lacks a statewide community college perspective that reflects broader operational, academic, and policy considerations. Including the MACC Executive Director or the Executive Director’s designee on the Program Workgroup would help ensure coordination, avoid duplication, and strengthen alignment with existing community college programs statewide.

Accordingly, MACC urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report on **HB 479 with AMENDMENTS** to include the MACC Executive Director or the Executive Director’s designee as a member of the Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program Workgroup.

Please contact Brad Phillips (bphillips@mdacc.org) or Drew Jabin (djabin@mdacc.org) with questions.

HB479_MSEA_Lamb_FWA.pdf

Uploaded by: Lauren Lamb

Position: FWA

FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS
House Bill 479
Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program and Program
Workgroup – Establishment

House Ways & Means Committee
February 11, 2026

Lauren Lamb
Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association supports, with certain amendments, House Bill 479. As written, the bill would establish the Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program, which would be administered and implemented by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) in consultation with the Maryland Higher Education Commission. The University System of Maryland would be required to develop, in consultation with the Department and the Commission, the program and the teacher preparation pathway. It would also establish the Southern Maryland Early College Teacher Pathway Program Workgroup to study and report on program needs and structure.

MSEA represents 76,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 44 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

Maryland continues to face educator shortages, and as we invest in the pipeline of future teachers and education support professionals, we must increase our focus on recruiting high school students who are deciding their next steps. We appreciate the sponsor's commitment to investing in young Marylanders and preparing the next generation of talented educators.

It is crucial to ensure that any new program model is aligned with existing initiatives, including the Teacher Academy of Maryland (TAM), a four-course Career and Technology Education (CTE) program for high school students who wish to

pursue a career in education.¹ Often, TAM students complete their ParaPro certification through the program, which enables them to work as paraeducators after graduation. TAM is active in Charles County Public Schools, Calvert County Public Schools, and St. Mary's County Public Schools.^{2 3 4} Additionally, MSDE recently launched a Registered Teacher Apprenticeship that is open to Marylanders 16 years or older, and Charles County Public Schools is already a participating employer.⁵

We are enthusiastic about the breadth of new pathways to careers in public education, and we welcome efforts to strengthen partnerships and scale programs to reach as many high school students as possible. To that end, we recommend the following amendments:

- (1) Designate members of the workgroup from each of the local educators' unions in Southern Maryland to ensure input from the educators who have firsthand experience implementing CTE and dual enrollment efforts.
- (2) Adjust the charge of the workgroup to the following:
 - a. Seeking opportunities to expand existing early teacher preparation programs.
 - b. Strengthening partnerships or establishing new partnerships that promote inter-county collaboration.
 - c. Identifying strategies to reach a wide range of students and increase access to programs so that participants in early teacher preparation programs reflect the diversity of Southern Maryland.
 - d. Determining whether a new program or an expansion of existing initiatives would be most effective in promoting education careers to students in Southern Maryland.

With these amendments, we urge the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 479.

¹ CTE Programs, Maryland State Department of Education. <https://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/pages/cte-programs-of-study/clusters/hrs.aspx#:~:text=TAM%20students%20can%20enroll%20directly,with%20a%20teacher%20preparation%20program>.

² Teacher Academy of Maryland, Charles County Public Schools. <https://www.ccboe.com/departments/career-and-technical-education/programs-by-school/st-charles-high-school/teacher-academy-of-maryland-tam>

³ Teacher Academy of Maryland, Career and Technical Education, Calvert County Public Schools. <https://www.calvertnet.k12.md.us/departments/instruction/career-and-technical-education>

⁴ Human Resource Services, St. Mary's County Public Schools. <https://courses.smcps.org/james-a-forrest-tech-center/human-resource-services>

⁵ MSDE-Sponsored Registered Teacher Apprenticeship, Maryland State Department of Education. <https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DEE/Program-Approval/Registered-Teacher-Apprenticeships.aspx>