



To the Maryland General Assembly,

The College of Southern Maryland faculty are writing to express our surprise and disapproval regarding Senate Bill 136. We were frankly stunned upon learning that a senator elected to serve and support Charles County would put forward legislation so clearly harmful to the residents of Southern Maryland, and Charles County in particular. As professional educators, we find it particularly upsetting that this legislation is being proposed under the guise of education reform.

To us, education reform means fixing problems in a system that is badly broken. The College of Southern Maryland is not broken. Not only is CSM ranked highly both nationally and in the state of Maryland, we have twice been recognized by the Aspen Institute for the excellent work we do. This is an extremely challenging time in the US for community colleges - nationally, enrollments are down significantly, while state and local funding has diminished. Add to that the challenges of responding to an unprecedented health care crisis, one which particularly impacts group learning, and we have had many hurdles to overcome at CSM. We have responded to these trials with energy and innovation because we believe that what we do is fundamentally, vitally important to our community. Our college has the capacity to change the lives of Southern Maryland residents, giving them the opportunities that come with an affordable higher education - significantly more and better job prospects, the ability to attend a transfer institution, and the knowledge that expands world views and creates more engaged citizens.

The senator's proposal threatens to take all of this away from Southern Maryland. In these difficult financial times, it is unclear how the college could survive such a reckless disruption of our infrastructure. Over decades, the college has thoughtfully built up the systems and personnel needed to provide education efficiently across three counties. We have also built curricula and attained accreditation as a cohesive unit serving those three counties. This is not a ball of string that can be unraveled overnight; Senate Bill 136 will leave chaos, create undue and inefficient replication of staff and faculty positions, and waste tuition dollars and public funds, with no clear positive purpose or outcome.

We are particularly frustrated that Senator Ellis would introduce such legislation without any communication with his constituents here at the college. There are hundreds of employees at CSM who reside in Charles County. We are unaware of any attempts by Senator Ellis to reach out to these individuals who are both his constituents, but also vital stakeholders, to gain insight or information about what impacts his bill would have on the college and the lives of CSM employees.

We are proud of the work the college does, but we know any institution can be made better. Senate Bill 136, however, doesn't make anything better for anyone. We sincerely hope that you will consider how dangerous this legislation is for our community.

Sincerely,

The College of Southern Maryland Faculty Senate

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