

Senate Bill 136 – Unfavorable Report
Helena Hancock

Dear Chairman and committee members,

My name is Helena Hancock, I am a Charles County resident and an employee of the College of Southern Maryland (CSM).

I am writing today in opposition to Senate Bill 136—College of Southern Maryland—Charles County Campus Transition to Charles County Community College. CSM is a regional college serving Charles, Calvert, and St. Mary’s counties. I do not believe that SB 136 is in the best interest of the students or taxpayers in Southern Maryland.

More than two decades ago, it was decided that becoming a regional college would be beneficial to all of Southern Maryland; that has not changed. Dismantling the College of Southern Maryland would decrease access to students, create unnecessary and costly duplication of administrative services and educational programs, and add to the tax burden of all three counties.

There seems to be some misunderstanding about the operations of CSM. For starters, CSM – like every college in the state – has been mitigating the pandemic for nearly two years, and that context is not reflected in anything being said currently about the college. The senator’s position that CSM has taken away STEM programs from Charles County is simply not true. You can get the full gambit of STEM programming as a Charles County student.

As far as the senator’s claim that CSM is taking away physical facilities including the La Plata Campus pool and the Children’s Learning Center (CLC):

- La Plata Campus’ 48-year-old Physical Education Building was closed when the campus went into remote operations in March 2020 – a moment that turned into a silver-lining that allowed CSM to address significant repairs to the facility. The earliest CSM could reopen the building is the fall of 2022. That said, CSM is in discussions with Charles County Government about the future of the pool in that building.
- The CLC too, was closed when the campus went into remote operations, along with the rest of the campus buildings. At that time, five of the children in the center were children of students; four were children of employees. And as with the pool, CSM is exploring several partnership opportunities for that facility to better serve our students as we emerge from the pandemic.

Our Focus to Finish initiative (7 Week Courses) offers significant short- and long-term benefits for our students. Devoting more energy and effort to each class makes for a better learning experience and better results from their education. The 7-week format lets students adapt their college experience to their life more easily, shifting course schedules to fit with other commitments and responsibilities.

I ask that the members of the Senate Committee for Education, Health and Environmental Affairs give SB 136 an unfavorable report and I welcome Sen Ellis to visit CSM and have an open dialogue with staff/faculty members, many of whom are his constituents, and discuss how we can all work together to best serve students in our region.