

DAVID E. GERRIE
10575 NEWPORT CHURCH ROAD
CHARLOTTE HALL, MD 20622
301 751-6337 • DAVIDGERRIE@MSN.COM

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Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee Senator Paul G. Pinsky, Chairman

Senator Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chairman 2 West

Miller Senate Office Building Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: In Favor of SB 136

Dear Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

I write in support of the legislation before you, SB 136, *Transition to Charles County Community College*.

The existing structure of the regional College of Southern Maryland rests upon several assumptions:

- The component counties have essentially the same composition, interests and academic objectives;
- That economies of scale will bring benefits not available to the individual constituents; and
- A larger institution will achieve a greater academic and professional stature well beyond that of a single county.

Changes in the fabric of our society have significantly undercut these assumptions. If the creation of a regional college were now being first considered, these assumptions would no longer be considered adequate support.

A diverging common interest

Perhaps from a great distance Charles, Calvert and St. Mary's counties are merely components in a southern Maryland mass. From a local perspective, however, the business, professional and academic environments have diverged from the rural cultures of the past.

The counties no longer share the same outlook, objectives or social composition. What will meet the college needs of one county, will not necessarily meet the needs of another.

Economies of scale

In the twenty-two years since the founding of CSM, the economies that justified its existence have changed dramatically. Infrastructure support is, for example, best supplied at a state-wide, rather than a three-county basis. Components such as

transcripts and on-line learning platforms should be supported by existing Maryland agencies, including MHCC. This would reduce the current duplication of effort.

Larger institutions

Certainly, larger institutions can provide a greater range of services. Yet, from a local perspective, the larger the institution, the more remote it is from the community it serves. Presumably, local leaders are better situated to understand the changes in their community. Declining enrollments, changing employment markets, and the evolving requirements of students are best managed as closely as possible.

Since its founding, Maryland has evolved a system of local administrative jurisdictions that have successfully balanced the dangers of duplication of effort with the advantages of economies of scale. The county in Maryland allows for local specialization and control while preserving for the state the larger, cross-jurisdictional needs.

The larger institution also presents its unique dangers. As the college extends its geographic reach, it often erects academic and professional walls that turn the focus inward, rather than on the students and community it serves. While the “town and gown” stresses can be exaggerated, they should not be ignored.

SB 136 provides a welcome opportunity to evaluate the current educational model that may not meet the needs of current students in the affected counties as well as state-wide. Equitable access to higher education resources is our objective. This bill, I believe, is a valuable beginning.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these remarks. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Respectfully,



David E. Gerrie