

Senate Bill 136
Dr. Bill Comey
Unfavorable Report
February 9, 2022

I am writing in opposition to Senate Bill 136 - College of Southern Maryland - Charles County Campus Transition to Charles County Community College.

I have had the privilege of working at the College of Southern Maryland (CSM) for the past thirty-six years. I have seen the college grow from a small liberal arts transfer institution serving mostly recent high school graduates to a much larger, nationally recognized comprehensive regional college serving a diverse student body across the entire Southern Maryland region. The success of the college has been built on expanding access, building partnerships, and leveraging resources across our region. Three smaller community colleges located in Southern Maryland could never have achieved the success or served the citizens of our region in the way CSM has been able to do.

I believe SB 136 would not serve the citizens of Charles County better. In fact, I believe it would decrease services and reduce educational offerings. The proposed small, stand-alone college it envisions would suffer from budget woes created by costly duplication of administrative services and drastically lowered enrollments as more than half the current students would be excluded from the new college because of county borders. There are economies of scale in administrative and academic services that come from a regional college. This is one of the reasons the College of Southern Maryland was established as a regional college in 2000. Sure, being a regional college means that the sometime choices need to be made about how and where services and courses are offered at the college's various campuses, but the overall benefits that come from a large well-resourced regional institution over a small less-resourced county-based institution far outweigh any perceived drawbacks. Just consider the added cost of having not one, but two or three Human Resource Departments, Payroll Departments, Budget Offices, Procurement Departments, General Counsels, Information Technology Departments, Marketing Departments, etc. These are all added costs that would take services and resources away from students.

The benefits of a strong, diverse, economically vibrant regional institution were what brought our elected leaders together in the 1990's to put aside parochial concerns and work across county lines to establish the College of Southern Maryland. It is why Senator Mike Miller, Senator "Mac" Middleton and Senator Roy Dyson came together to jointly sponsor legislation to create the College of Southern Maryland. It is why the Calvert County Commissioners, the Charles County Commissioners, and the St. Mary's County Commissioners chose to forego party and county politics to endorse the formation of a regional college. They all recognized a good idea and worked to make it into a reality.

What was a good idea then, has turned into a great institution now. Since 2000, CSM has expanded its programs for students, has grown its educational offerings, has deepened its commitment to equity, has widened its footprint, and has increased its services to the entire Southern Maryland community.

I ask the members of this committee to reaffirm the vision that established the College of Southern Maryland.

I ask that the members of the Senate Committee for Education, Health and Environmental Affairs give this bill an unfavorable report.