



**Senate Bill 136**  
**Maureen Murphy, Ph.D., President**  
**College of Southern Maryland**  
**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 do not believe SB 136 is in the best interest of the students or taxpayers in Southern Maryland. 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.

The benefit of a regional college is that students from all three counties have access to a wide variety of educational opportunities without having to leave the region. Because it is a regional college, the College of Southern Maryland can offer these programs to Southern Maryland students at an in-county tuition rate. A separate, much smaller college in Charles County would not be able to afford the variety of offerings, which would either limit student opportunity or require them to attend another college at out-of-county tuition rates to receive their education.

Existing employees and buildings cannot simply be transferred. Those buildings belong to the Board of Trustees and the employees work for the College of Southern Maryland. A separate college in Charles County would have to secure facilities, hire employees, and receive authorization to operate through the Maryland Higher Education Commission and accreditation from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, which is a multi-year process.

Regional accreditation is what guarantees that credits transfer and that the institution is able to receive federal funds. Until it is fully accredited, students at this other college would have no access to federal financial aid, including Pell grants, and the college could not receive National Science Foundation or other grants.

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It has come to our attention that the justification for SB 136 is based on some fundamental misunderstandings about the operations of the College of Southern Maryland. For starters, CSM – like every college in the state – has been mitigating the pandemic for nearly two years, going into a third year, and this context is important. Nothing is business as usual.

Statements regarding CSM moving STEM or health science programs out of Charles County are simply not true. The full range of STEM programs are offered at our La Plata campus in Charles County. In addition, and despite the pandemic, we were able to stand up a new charter of the National Society of Black Engineers in December of 2020 and a new Society of Women Engineers club in January of 2021. We are also proud to have been a recipient of a \$953,243 award from the National Science Foundation's Scholarships in STEM program to provide scholarship opportunities to STEM students, and a second NSF grant for \$257,912 to help students pursue degrees in cybersecurity. These grants would not be available to students attending the college proposed in SB 136.

Additionally, a Center for health Sciences, which will expand health education in Southern Maryland, is currently under construction at our Hughesville campus, in Charles County. We are hopeful the construction will be completed by late summer or early Fall.

Claims regarding closures do not at all consider the effects of the pandemic. When the College of Southern Maryland moved to remote operations in March of 2020, we did a deep assessment of our buildings. The Physical Education Building has been shut down for extensive repairs, costing over \$5M, and is not anticipated to reopen before Fall 2022. Further, the college has been exploring local partnerships for pool operations.

Likewise, the Children's Learning Center was closed when the campus went into remote operations. At that time, five of the children in the center were children of students; four were children of employees. And as with the pool, we are exploring several partnership opportunities for that facility to better serve our community as we emerge from the pandemic.

The college's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusivity is unsurpassed and permeates throughout our communities. CSM adding 7-week class schedules **alongside the 15-week class schedule** is part of our commitment to equity. The traditional academic calendar is a privileged structure, serving best students from families who can support their full-time attendance over two semesters with a summer off. CSM students are 65% part-time, over 80% are in the paid workforce, and nearly half report being primary caregivers of members of their families. We scaled 7-week courses to better serve these students, and a recent student surveys showed that 77% of students favored or were neutral about course length. Additionally, this schedule allowed 700 students who had not begun studies at the beginning of the Fall to begin mid-October.

A separate Charles County College will not serve the residents in Charles County well at all. It is move backward at a time when we need to embrace innovation. The cost of two community colleges would be an irresponsible use of public funds, and would decrease opportunities for Southern Maryland students at a time they need them most.

I urge the committee to give SB 136 an unfavorable report.