

HB792 Testimony

Dr. Sean W. Bulson, Superintendent of Harford County Public Schools

Thank you for the opportunity today to testify in support of HB792 to establish a workgroup to design a Career Credential Jump Start Program. Literally for decades in K-12 education, we have been talking about college and career readiness. In recent years, interest has been growing to bring more attention to the “career” half of that goal, but challenges remain.

When it comes to career preparation, community colleges are our best local partners to improve students’ access to career preparation. Dual enrollment opportunities exist for students to be able to access credit bearing courses at higher education institutions at a reduced cost, but that benefit does not extend to non-credit bearing courses offered by those same institutions. For students who are interested in entering the workforce directly following high school, many of the courses that would provide specific career training are not available to them at a reduced cost. This bill establishes a workgroup to study the barriers and opportunities for those students.

Currently, Harford County Public Schools is partnering with Harford Community College to offer high school seniors who did not have plans to attend college after high school access to career credentials through non-credit coursework this spring. We are excited about this pilot, but we are not yet ready to scale. I could go on at length about the challenges we still need to address, but I submit that a statewide study as established in this bill would benefit many students in the same circumstances as the students in our pilot.

HCPS is fortunate to have such a devoted partner as HCC, but I am confident that state-level solutions to challenges we've confronted would allow us to scale more quickly to serve more students.

The Blueprint requires students to have access to career-development opportunities, but moving this work from legislative action to genuine opportunities for students will require greater focus.