

January 31, 2023

Cynthia S. Bambara  
President  
Allegany College of Maryland  
12401 Willowbrook Road, SE  
Cumberland, MD 21502

Dear Ms. Bambara,

Harford County Public Schools is very pleased to offer the P-TECH educational model as a partnership between the US. Army Communications-Electronics Command at Aberdeen Proving Ground and Harford Community College. As this innovative program blends high school and college academics, it allows our students to accelerate their learning and begin taking college level courses in high school.

This unique opportunity has also brought to light some unique obstacles that we have or will experience in the years ahead. We are writing this letter in support of the legislative request that is being made by the Western Maryland Delegation to ensure that these obstacles are removed and that our students are given every opportunity to be successful.

Specifically, our P-TECH students, upon starting year five in the program and becoming full time college students at Harford Community College, do not technically have a completed high school diploma. These P-TECH students are not considered to have completed the P-TECH program until they have earned the college-level Associate's degree. In some cases, it may take students up to six years to complete the Associate's degree requirements. For students who need additional time to earn the Associate's degree, the high school diploma is kept "on file" with the public school system, per requirement of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), until the Associate's degree has been earned. When students meet the P-TECH program requirements by earning the Associate's degree and the high school diploma, they are awarded both.

These current guidelines can negatively impact student participants in the following ways:

- a. Federal Financial Aid: Participants are ineligible for federal aid- specifically Pell Grants because they do not have a high school diploma. A transcript or letter stating they have met the requirements to graduate is not acceptable. Students who take extra courses beyond the PTECH pathway are not provided funding which negatively impacts their educational growth and development.
- b. College Athletics: Students must meet a minimum number of credit hours to participate. As mentioned above students are unable to receive federal aid to take classes beyond their P-TECH pathway to increase the number of credits per semester.
- c. Driver's License: Many PTECH students do not obtain their learners permit until they turn 18. Without their diploma, they have to wait 9 months to obtain the Provisional License and extended probationary period causes transportation issues once they are out of high school and transporting themselves to our campus.

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This letter serves as our request and support of legislative revisions related to the practice of keeping the diploma “on file” for P-TECH students for the reasons outlined above. We further ask that all P-TECH funding opportunities (grant to the public school), FTE (to both public school and community college), and the grant to the community college (for 50% or 25% tuition and fees) remain intact despite the release of the diploma to the students who have fulfilled the requirements of their high school graduation. We anticipate additional road blocks for P-TECH students who do not have access to their diploma as the program continues to grow and expand in our county.

Thank you for the opportunity to advocate for this legislative revision. Please let me know if you would like to discuss this further. I look forward to your response to this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S Bulson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Sean Bulson, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Harford County Public Schools