



WICOMICO COUNTY, MARYLAND

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WICOMICO COUNTY COUNCIL

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February 7, 2024

The Honorable Bill Ferguson
President, Maryland State Senate
H-107 State House
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Adrienne Jones
Speaker, Maryland House of Delegates
H-101, State House
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Guy Guzzone
Chair, Budget and Taxation Committee
Maryland State Senate
3 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Ben Barnes
Chair, Appropriations Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
121 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear President Ferguson, Speaker Jones, Chair Guzzone, and Chair Barnes:

The Governor's Budget and Management Office has issued the proposed 2025 budget which includes historic cuts to community college funding with the Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act (BFRA). The BFRA would rebase the Cade formula funding to 26.5% --a cut from the full 29% which was only fully reached within the past two years. The impact on Wor-Wic Community College is almost a 1.5 million dollar cut to the college's operating budget.

The rationale for these funding cuts was not based on good policy and in fact will cripple Wor-Wic Community College's efforts to restore enrollment across programs, including those dedicated to workforce development. Wor-Wic Community College has made enormous strides in building workforce development, including the skilled trades. All of this progress is at risk with these funding cuts.

Originally, the Cade Funding formula established an equitable distribution of funding by linking funding to four-year public institutions and attempts to assure the quality of community colleges and the students they serve. The cuts instituted in the BFRA bill are absolutely devastating and particularly the impact on rural colleges—especially those on the Eastern Shore. These cuts are permanent and ongoing. They represent the fourth largest funding cuts in the history of the Cade Formula after those of the Great Recession and the COVID pandemic.

We are writing to express our strong support for full Cade funding for community colleges in our state for the following reasons:

- The BRFA disproportionately targets community colleges in reducing the percentage tie to the four-year public universities.
- The Cade formula was fully funded at 29% for the past two fiscal years.
- Enrollment is increasing, with community colleges leading higher education with an 8.3% increase. Public four-year enrollment increase being 2%.
- Reducing Cade in a time of enrollment growth stretches funding even more with less support for all students.
- Despite previous enrollment declines, community colleges have continued to produce more graduates annually, with a 28% increase from 2009-10 (baseline for the beginning of enrollment decline) to 2021-22, the most current year available.
- Strong State funding provides the necessary support services to help students complete.
- Community colleges have been asked to close the skills gap in workforce shortages.
- Community colleges have been tasked with post-college and career readiness pathways through the Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation, of which they are already receiving 75% of the full tuition costs for dual enrollment students.
- Community colleges provide opportunities for our State's diverse and underserved populations.
- The actions that are included in the BRFA impact students who are the most vulnerable and are struggling to succeed.
- The BRFA reductions would require students to pay even more in tuition, which reduces the chance that recent high school students will enroll at all, according to research.
- Affordability remains the biggest barrier to student success, this only makes postsecondary education further out of reach.
- Community colleges compete in the same academic labor market for skilled faculty and staff yet increases in the cost of living for our public four-year institutions that are not also included in our Cade calculation harm our ability to compete, directly impacting our ability to pay our employees, especially in a time when Collective Bargaining is being implemented for our segment.

We would like to highlight 90% of students from Wor-Wic Community College stay in Maryland after achieving their academic goals. One important statistic is 48% of Wor-Wic students transfer to a university to continue their education. In addition, Wor-Wic trains local emergency medical services staff, nurses, police, correction officers, welders, manufacturing skilled workers, etc.

We appreciate your attention to this important matter and your support for full Cade funding to Maryland's community colleges specifically Wor-Wic Community College serving three communities on the Lower Eastern Shore.

Sincerely,

WICOMICO COUNTY, MARYLAND



Julie Giordano, County Executive



Jeff Merritt, Council Vice President

cc: The Honorable Wes Moore, Governor of Maryland
Wicomico County Council
Eastern Shore Delegation