



**Senate Bill 121**  
**College of Southern Maryland, Board of Trustees**  
**Position: Unfavorable**  
**January 17, 2024**

We are writing in opposition to Senate Bill 121—College of Southern Maryland - Funding and Responsibilities - La Plata Pool. The College of Southern Maryland is a nationally recognized regional community college that creates opportunities for academic credentials and workforce development for CSM students in Southern Maryland through access, momentum, and mobility.

SB 121 is not in the best interest of the students or taxpayers in Southern Maryland. This bill is an unfunded local mandate that diverts much-needed operational funding on an ongoing annual basis away from resources that increase educational access for Southern Maryland residents; support current students in gaining momentum toward their educational goals; and support our students/alumni to find sustainable wages that bolster their social and economic mobility.

The Physical Education Building, which houses the La Plata pool, was closed along with all CSM campus buildings in March 2020 because of the global pandemic. During this time, CSM contracted an engineering firm to conduct a complete assessment of the aging building, which was built in 1974, and of its systems to develop a cost-effective, energy-efficient solution to position the building for the future.

As a result of this assessment, significant pool safety concerns, and factors including previous customer usage studies and the loss of associated tuition revenue due to the elimination of physical education graduation requirements, the CSM Trustees unanimously made the decision to permanently close the 50-year-old pool. The lack of amenities like a shallow pool area for young swimmers, a spectator area for parents, an entry ramp for swimmers with mobility issues, a warm-water therapy pool and other features standard in modern aquatics centers had resulted in CSM continuously experiencing declining usage and operational deficits over the past decade.

In light of these issues coupled with overall declining enrollment for the college, the Trustees were faced with critical, mission-focused, budget decisions. This included the future of CSM's Wellness and Aquatics Center at the Leonardtown Campus which was similarly situated in experiencing operating deficits. This stand-alone facility was built in 2010 featuring modern and expected amenities, and the St. Mary's County Commissioners agreed in Fall 2021 to a phased approach for its Recreation and Parks Division to assume programming and operations of this turnkey facility so as to provide year-round recreational opportunities for the community.

Since Fall 2022, the Charles County community has asked about the possibility of reopening the La Plata pool. CSM has been facilitating continued conversations for over a year with Charles County leaders, including the local Board of County Commissioners as well as the Charles County State Delegation, to identify a viable solution to address the community's interest in having an aquatic facility in Charles County.

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**La Plata Campus**  
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La Plata, MD 20646  
301-934-2251 • 301-870-3008

**Leonardtown Campus**  
22950 Hollywood Road  
Leonardtown, MD 20650  
240-725-5300

**Prince Frederick Campus**  
115 J.W. Williams Road  
Prince Frederick, MD 20678  
443-550-6000

**Regional Hughesville Campus**  
6105 Foster Place,  
Hughesville MD 20637  
301-539-4730

CSM's leadership team provided our stakeholders with a feasibility study that offered three reopening proposals, including repairing the current pool as is, and two proposals for repairing and expansion options. To reopen the current pool, the study identified several substantial repairs. Among these 19 areas of safety concerns are significant cracking in the pool shell plaster, expired drains, and replacement requirements for the circulation pump and chlorinator system.

The cost for renovations and to address these safety concerns is estimated at \$3 million and would take approximately two years to complete. Capital costs associated with expanding the current pool into a more modern facility to meet the needs of a growing multi-generational and diverse community range between \$9 million and \$21 million. In addition to renovation costs, the ongoing operating costs are estimated between \$350,000 to \$600,000 per year based on the type of facility and the community's usage.

As a result of their further study and deliberations, the Board of County Commissioners advised the Charles County Delegation on December 12, 2023 that the La Plata pool at CSM is not a viable short-term option as a recreational facility for Charles County citizens due to its age, condition, and restricted use. They have presented their plans to invest and expedite a longer-term solution for a new, county owned and operated multi-generational facility that will last at least 30 to 40 more years, and will increase amenities and access.

SB 121 requires the college to pay for the renovations and operations of an aging pool, built 50 years ago and now requiring significant repairs. As a regional college in Maryland, CSM has the unique Capital Projects funding formula of the state carrying 75% of the construction costs, while the specific county where the construction occurs pays 25%. However, SB 121 circumvents this formula, placing the full cost of the pool renovations and its operations on the college's operational budget. Further, the La Plata Pool has not been included in the vetting process as part of the Maryland Association of Community Colleges Capital Prioritization List for State funding. By circumventing this process, neither the college nor the local jurisdiction would be reimbursed for any renovation funds expended. These costs plus the associated operational costs will negatively impact the current budget and all future operational budget requests. The Trustees have agreed that this is a venture that CSM can neither operationally afford nor sustain.

This is a local issue, and SB 121 oversteps local authority to complete its feasibility study and use the design-build method to support a more efficient process towards procurement and completion. As a Trustee of the College of Southern Maryland, I ask that the members of the Senate Committee for Budget and Taxations give an unfavorable report to SB 121.

College of Southern Maryland, Board of Trustees

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