



ALLEGANY COLLEGE
of MARYLAND
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

House Ways and Means Committee
TESTIMONY

Submitted by
Dr. Cynthia Bambara, President
Allegany College of Maryland

February 22, 2023

BILL: HB0689 - Pathways in Technology Early College High (P-TECH) School Program – High School Diplomas

POSITION: FAVORABLE

On behalf of Allegany College of Maryland, I am pleased to offer favorable support of HB0689.

Beginning in the 2017-2018 school year, Allegany College of Maryland in cooperation with the Allegany County Public Schools (ACPS), began to offer incoming ninth grade students the opportunity to participate in an early college program through the Allegany County Pathways in Technology Early College High (P-TECH) Program. This opportunity was made possible through collaboration between ACPS, Allegany College of Maryland, and several industry partners, including UPMC Western Maryland.

As you are aware, the P-TECH program is a high school and beyond (9-14) model, which combines high school, college, and the world of work. The program's mission is to provide students with a free education that starts in grade nine, continues through high school completion with a high school diploma, and culminates in the attainment of an Associate Degree in Computer Technology.

Participating students will gain workplace skills and have access to mentoring and other career experiences. The ultimate goal of the P-TECH program of study in Allegany County is for students to earn an Associate of Applied Science Degree in Computer Technology with a Cybersecurity option within two years of graduating from ACPS. This opportunity has also brought to light some unique obstacles that we have experienced and this request will help to remove these barriers and provide students every opportunity to be successful.

Specifically, our P-TECH students, upon starting year five in the program and becoming full-time college students, are not awarded their high school diploma, although they have completed all the requirements for high school graduation during year 4 of the program. These P-TECH students are not considered to have completed the P-TECH program until they have earned the college-level Associate's degree. For students who choose the 5 year or 6 year P-TECH Pathway, 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.

CYNTHIA S. BAMBARA, PRESIDENT

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These current guidelines can negatively impact P-TECH 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 P-TECH 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 P-TECH 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.

This legislative change would allow P-TECH participants to receive their high school diploma following completion of all high school graduation requirements. Without this change, 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 and across the State.

Thank you for the opportunity to advocate for this legislative revision to remove this barrier and provide students every opportunity to be successful.