

LEGISLATIVE IMPACT REPORT 2026

Howard Community College
Office of Government and External Affairs



Executive Summary

Fiscal Year 27 State and County Funding for Howard Community College



State Operating
\$34.9M



State Capital
\$2.4M



County Operating
\$47.2M
(Proposed)



County Capital
\$3M
(Proposed)

The 2026 Maryland General Assembly session took place in a more constrained fiscal environment, as state leaders balanced competing priorities while continuing to invest in education and workforce development. The state faced a challenging budget deficit of \$1.5 billion. Throughout the 90-day session, Howard Community College (HCC) engaged with state and local leaders to advocate for policies and funding that support student success, access, and economic mobility.

FY27 State Operating Budget

The Budget Reconciliation and Financing Act (BRFA) is the state's primary tool for balancing the budget and making the policy changes needed to support its financial plan. In FY2027, the BRFA reflects a more cautious fiscal environment with a modest increase for community colleges, but limited growth and constrained funding in future years. As currently passed, the BRFA establishes a 3% funding cap in state support in FY28 and FY29. Through the Senator John A. Cade Funding Formula, community colleges as a whole received \$438,855,046 in the state's FY27 operating budget.

Howard Community College received **\$34,939,725**, a 3% increase of \$1,017,662.

Notably, approximately \$1 million in funding for the PROMISE Scholarship was restored during deliberations through coordinated advocacy efforts.

FY27 State Capital Budget

In the FY27 Capital Budget, Howard Community College received \$2.1 million for the Cathy and Danny Bell Workforce Development and Trades Center. The college also received \$354,281 from the Facilities Renewal Grant Program which will fund infrastructure improvements within the college.

Outlook

As an institution serving more than 22,000 students annually, continued engagement with state and local partners is essential to ensure that funding levels remain aligned with enrollment trends, workforce development demands, and the college's mission to support student success and economic mobility.

Community colleges are the economic engines of our communities and as open enrollment institutions, we serve *everyone*.

At a time when our community colleges continue enrollment growth trends, capping future funding is incongruent with the state's current educational policy and economic competitiveness goals.

In addition to budget outcomes, the session advanced several pieces of legislation impacting student access, workforce development, financial aid, and economic growth. HCC worked in close coordination with the Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC) and statewide partners to advance policies which were reinforced through student and leadership engagement, including Student Advocacy Day and committee testimony.



Student and employee, Deanne Alexander, testifies at County Operating Budget Hearing.

At the local level, Howard County Executive Calvin Ball has proposed fully funding the college's priorities in his FY27 Operating and Capital budgets. The college will continue to work closely with the Howard County Council as they finalize the County budget to ensure alignment with institutional needs and strategic priorities. This request includes \$47.2 million in operational funding, a \$1.3 million increase, and \$3 million in capital funding.

Student Advocacy Day, 2026

Students from Howard Community College joined peers from all 16 Maryland community colleges in Annapolis for the 2026 Student Advocacy Day, meeting directly with legislators and their staff to discuss issues impacting higher education. Students advocated for dual enrollment, workforce development programs such as cybersecurity, and financial aid initiatives that support affordability and student success.

Among HCC's student advocates was Ian King-Smith, Club Liaison for the Student Government Association, who shared how the Dr. Edward L. and Catherine Joan Cochran Family Endowment scholarship supported her educational journey. During the visit, she also connected with Delegate Courtney Watson, whose parents established the HCC scholarship.



“Receiving the Cochran Scholarship gave me one of the most valuable gifts anyone can receive: the gift of time. It gave me the ability to focus on my studies, become involved in the Student Government Association, and continue serving my community through volunteer work that I care deeply about,” said King-Smith. “Scholarships like this do more than ease financial burdens, they create opportunities for students to grow, lead, and thrive.”



Delegate Courtney Watson, Ian King-Smith

Student Advocacy Day remains an important opportunity for the college to elevate student voices and reinforce its commitment to access, workforce readiness, and economic mobility through engagement with state leaders.



Championing Support for Student Parents (SB 420)

Dr. Daria J. Willis, President of Howard Community College, provided testimony before the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee in support of Senate Bill 420, legislation focused on improving support for pregnant and parenting students across public institutions of higher education.

In her remarks, Dr. Willis emphasized the importance of data-informed policy, noting that institutions cannot effectively

serve a population they do not fully understand. Senate Bill 420 requires colleges and universities to collect and report data on student parents and to develop plans that connect them with essential resources, including childcare, health care, and academic accommodations.

This engagement reflects the college's broader advocacy efforts to support student success by expanding access to resources that enable all students to persist



President Willis testifying on SB420

and complete their educational goals, ensuring that becoming a parent does not limit opportunity and that the college continues to meet students where they dream.

Education and Economic Development Community College State Aid Briefing

Maureen Evans, Vice President of Government and External Affairs, testified before the House Appropriations Education and Economic Development Subcommittee (EED).

Vice President Evans highlighted Howard Community College's outcomes on transfer rate performance, Jump Start dual enrollment growth, the

enhancement of wraparound services for students, and underscored the importance of continued support to continue these initiatives.

Community colleges are the most efficient investment this state can make in workforce readiness, economic mobility and equitable access to higher education.



Maureen Evans, Dr. Sandra Kurtinitis, Dr. Brad Phillips, Former Education Secretary Sanjay Rai

MACC/ACCT Conference Capitol Hill Meeting

During the Association of Community College Trustees Conference, President Daria J. Willis, Board of Trustees Chair, Vivian Moore- Lawyer, and other members of the Maryland Association of Community Colleges (MACC) met with members of our Federal Delegation to advocate on behalf of Maryland Community Colleges.

Senator Chris Van Hollen, Representatives Steny Hoyer, Sarah Elfreth, Johnny Olszewski,

and April McClain Delaney heard from our leadership about the importance of keeping community colleges affordable by expanding access to Pell grants and strengthening our workforce development initiatives.



HCC Leadership Meets with Maryland's Federal Delegation



Chair Lawyer, Representative Elfreth, President Willis

2026 Key Legislative Initiatives

The following provides a summary of key legislation considered during the 2026 Maryland General Assembly session with relevance to Howard Community College. These measures reflect a range of policy areas, including student access, workforce

development, financial aid, and economic development. While not exhaustive, this section highlights legislation with the most direct or potential impact on the college and its students.

Who Maryland Community Colleges Serve

279,653	69,000	23,000	11,300	33,200
Students Served	Female Students	Students Under 18	Students 65+	Students of Color

MACC Analytics: Fast Facts – Fiscal Year 2024-2025, Fall 2025

HB 6 / SB 420: Public Institutions of Higher Education - Pregnant and Parenting Students - Plan and Reporting

Status: Passed both Chambers; to Governor for signature.

Synopsis:
Requires public institutions of higher education to develop and publish plans supporting pregnant and parenting students and mandates data collection and reporting through the Maryland Higher Education Commission.

Impact on Howard Community College:
This legislation introduces new institutional requirements related to planning, reporting, and student support services. It provides an opportunity to further strengthen resources for student parents, consistent with the college’s commitment to access and student success, and furthering the culture of care and belonging.

SB 763: Maryland Technology Development Corporation (TEDCO) – Maryland Growth Initiative

Status: Passed both Chambers; to Governor for signature.

Synopsis:
Advances initiatives to support innovation, entrepreneurship, and technology development through TEDCO.

Impact on Howard Community College:
This legislation reflects continued state investment in innovation and entrepreneurship. It may create opportunities for future collaboration, workforce alignment, and program development in high-growth sectors.

SB 869: Economic Development – Maryland Workforce Launch Pilot Program

Status: Passed both chambers, to Governor for signature.

Synopsis:
Establishes a pilot program within the Department of Commerce that will provide no-cost workforce training as a recruitment tool for strategic industries and qualified businesses.

Impact on Howard Community College:
Requires the Department of Commerce to partner with two community colleges to provide training services. The collaborating institutions have not yet been selected.

SB 509: Higher Education - Workforce Pell Grant Program – Implementation

Status: Passed both Chambers; to Governor for signature.

Synopsis:
Implements the federal Workforce Pell Grant program, expanding Pell eligibility to short-term workforce training programs.

Impact on Howard Community College:
This legislation significantly enhances access to financial aid for students pursuing workforce credentials. It aligns closely with institutional priorities to expand noncredit and career-focused programming and may support enrollment growth in high-demand fields.

HB 898 / SB 388: Economic Development - Delivering Economic Competitiveness and Advancing Development Efforts (DECADE) Act

Status: Passed both Chambers; to Governor for signature.

Synopsis:
Expands and modernizes economic development programs and incentives across Maryland.

Impact on Howard Community College:
This legislation strengthens the state's economic development ecosystem and may create opportunities for the college to align workforce training and academic programs with emerging industries and regional priorities.

50,000 sq. ft. New Workforce Center (Opening Fall 2026)

The Cathy and Danny Bell Workforce Development & Trades Center (WDTC) will house in-demand manufacturing programs that align with Governor Wes Moore's economic strategy of investing in "lighthouse initiatives," which include life sciences, information technology, manufacturing, aerospace and defense.



HCC is the largest community college sponsor of registered apprentices in Maryland.

Maryland Department of Labor



SB 597: Higher Education - Maryland Artificial Intelligence Partnership

Status: Passed both Chambers; to Governor for signature.

Synopsis:

Establishes a statewide artificial intelligence partnership within the University System of Maryland, including fellowship and innovation initiatives.

Impact on Howard Community College:

This legislation advances the state's focus on emerging technologies and innovation. As implementation of AI progresses, there may be opportunities to ensure community colleges are included in future partnerships, workforce pipelines, and applied learning initiatives.

HB 1473 / SB 770: Economic Development - Maryland's Future Board – Establishment

Status: Passed both Chambers; enacted.

Synopsis:

Establishes the Maryland's Future Board under the Department of Commerce to develop, evaluate, and revise a visionary plan for the future of Maryland; requires the Board to make recommendations for projects based on that plan to the Governor and the General Assembly; establishes the Maryland's Future Fund; and requires the Comptroller to report on economic growth trends in the state.

Impact on Howard Community College:

This legislation establishes a formal framework for long-term economic planning in Maryland. It may shape future statewide workforce and industry priorities and presents an opportunity for Howard Community College to align academic and workforce programs with emerging economic development strategies.

HB 852 / SB 285: Higher Education - Scholarships for Correctional Officers

Status: Passed both Chambers; to Governor for signature.

Synopsis:

Expands eligibility for existing scholarship programs to include correctional officers.

Impact on Howard Community College:

This legislation supports workforce development by expanding access to education and training for correctional officers, which may contribute to increased participation in community college programs.

SB 805: Income Tax - Student Loan Debt Relief Tax Credit – Alterations

Status: Passed both Chambers; to Governor for signature.

Synopsis:

Modifies provisions of the state's student loan debt relief tax credit program.

Impact on Howard Community College:

This legislation reflects ongoing state efforts to address student debt. While it does not directly impact institutional operations, it may influence student financial stability and future enrollment.

HB 1530: Higher Education - Undocumented Students - Out-of-State Tuition Exemption Eligibility

Status: Passed both Chambers; to Governor for signature.

Synopsis:

Reduces the number of years required for tax filing to qualify for in-state tuition from three to two.

Impact on Howard Community College:

This legislation expands access to affordable education for undocumented students and may support enrollment growth while advancing institutional priorities related to equity and access.

SB 311: Education - The Blueprint for Maryland's Future – Revisions

Status: Passed both Chambers; to Governor for signature.

Synopsis:

Revises elements of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, including adjustments to funding formulas, teacher certification requirements, and accountability structures.

Impact on Howard Community College:

While primarily focused on K-12 education, this legislation may influence student readiness and long-term enrollment pipelines. Continued monitoring will be important to assess alignment with workforce and transfer pathways.

HB 720 / SB 7: Higher Education - Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Conflicts Scholarship

Status: Passed both Chambers; to Governor for signature.

Synopsis:

Extends eligibility for a scholarship supporting veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts.

Impact on Howard Community College:

This legislation supports continued access to higher education for veteran students and may contribute to enrollment and persistence among this population.

SB 101: Higher Education - Loan Repayment and Scholarships for Correctional Officers

Status: Passed both Chambers; to Governor for signature.

Synopsis:

Expands eligibility for loan repayment and scholarship programs to include correctional officers.

Impact on Howard Community College:

This legislation supports workforce development efforts by expanding access to education and training opportunities for correctional officers, which may contribute to increased participation in community college programs.

HB 3: Higher Education - Student Financial Assistance - Dependents of Public Safety Employees

Status: Passed both Chambers; to Governor for signature.

Synopsis:

Provides in-state tuition benefits to spouses and dependents of public safety employees who die in the line of duty.

Impact on Howard Community College:

This legislation expands access to affordable education for eligible students and may support enrollment among this population, aligning with broader workforce and public service support initiatives.

HB 457: Institutions of Higher Education - Provision of Menstrual Hygiene Products – Requirement

Status: Passed both Chambers; to Governor for signature.

Synopsis:

Requires each institution of higher education that provides on-campus housing to provide, free of charge, menstrual hygiene products in all student health centers.

Impact on Howard Community College:

HCC began providing free menstrual products in 2024 as part of its ongoing commitment to student wellness, access, and belonging. This legislation aligns with the college's existing efforts to reduce barriers for students and support basic needs that contribute to student success.

HB 818: Higher Education - Foster Care Recipients and Homeless Youth - Tuition Exemption and Associated Benefits

Status: Did not pass.

Synopsis:

Would have expanded benefits for foster care recipients and homeless youth to include housing, materials, and related educational costs.

Impact on Howard Community College:

This legislation reflected a potential opportunity to further reduce barriers for vulnerable student populations. Its outcome does not affect current operations but signals ongoing policy interest in this area.

We want to thank our partners at the federal, state, and local levels for their steadfast support of Howard Community College. As the premier higher education resource for personal and professional achievement in Howard County, HCC is sincerely grateful for the ongoing investment in our institution's growth. We look forward to continuing partnerships that ensure we provide pathways to success while meeting students where they dream.