



Testimony before the Education, Business and Administration Subcommittee
Of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

By Dr. DeRionne Pollard, President, Montgomery College

3 West Wing, Miller Senate Office Building, Annapolis

February 10, 2012 at 1:00 p.m.

Good afternoon! I am delighted to join you today to discuss Maryland's community colleges. I know each of you cares deeply for your community's college. I want to especially convey my appreciation to Senators Nancy King and Rich Madaleno for your long-time support of Montgomery College.

First, let me acknowledge our appreciation for the governor's budget for community colleges. I think it's fair to say our concerns primarily lie with the out-years – with the uncertainty of funding that lies ahead, particularly without the benefit of the Cade formula and the added cost of pensions.

Our colleges face a great deal of uncertainty. Many of our counties have fiscal challenges. Montgomery College's county aid has been cut by \$12 million in the last two years, which is 11.4 percent of our budget. It's not because our county doesn't believe in us; it's because the funds just aren't there. Our FY13 operating funding is still unknown.

That is why we are particularly concerned about the impact that transferring pension costs will have on our colleges and local governments. Forty-two percent of Montgomery College employees are enrolled in the so-called "teacher pension" system. The shifting of pension costs to the counties is of serious concern to our college for two reasons: 1) the cost associated with College employees enrolled in this pension plan, and 2) the long-term ability of Montgomery County to afford its commitment to the College and to other important public services

And here's the bottom line: we're a good bang for the buck. Your community colleges are a good investment because we can help you address the long-term fiscal and economic health

of our state. We believe that our academic and workforce training programs are essential to maintaining and building a skilled workforce—a workforce that is the backbone of a strong economy and a thriving middle class.

Let me tell you about the Montgomery College of today. We had a record credit enrollment of nearly 27,000 students this fall. That gave us the largest undergraduate student body in the state, surpassing even the University of Maryland College Park. Of these students, 68 percent were minorities. Nearly one-third of our students qualified for federal Pell grants. The average family income for these students was less than \$23,000. One in seven had incomes under \$1,000. Many of our students are recent public school graduates. Of all Montgomery County Public School graduates who stay in-state for college, 60 percent attend Montgomery College.

But it's not just young people. In addition to our credit students, another 24,000 students enrolled in our Workforce Development and Continuing Education programs last year. Their average age is 37; many are engaged in apprenticeship and workforce training programs in key middle skill job arenas, like health care fields.

Did you know that according to the National Science Foundation (NSF), nearly half of all science, engineering and health students who go on to receive a bachelors or master's degrees attended a community college? That there are more middle skill jobs in Maryland than there are skilled workers?

Our residents need everything we have to offer, from our traditional transfer programs like engineering to career programs like automotive technology. Marylanders clearly understand that a post-secondary educational is essential to succeeding in today's economy. And they're turning to their community colleges.

Let me give just one example. Ismail is following in the footsteps of his mother, a nurse and Montgomery College graduate. His inspiration? Dr. Clyde Clark, his math professor and an engineer. Ismail will be the first male in his family to earn a degree. He said "when I walk across your stage some may see it as a minor achievement, but for me and my family it will be the start of an educational revolution." He hopes to inspire his nephews to do the same.

Maryland does need an educational revolution, given that we rank 25th among the states in the percentage of high school graduates going directly to college. Community colleges are ready to lead the way. Your support is vital.

MC is committed to meeting the state's completion goals. That's why we re-tooled our developmental math program. Next, I want to change our advising and counseling system to become a stronger guidance path system, a "GPS" to help our students succeed in a timely fashion. But, even with operational efficiencies, resources are needed to drive change and ensure access. And, affordability remains a significant concern—applications for financial aid have grown by 80 percent over the last 5 years at MC alone. This fall 4,000 students did not enroll after qualifying for but failing to receive any college grants. That's the equivalent of turning away all of the students from Gaithersburg and Einstein High Schools.

As I said earlier, 60 percent of MCPS graduates who stay in state for college attend Montgomery College. These young people have the potential to be our “next great generation.” We need to ensure that every one of these students has a place at the College; has the opportunity to be successful and obtain a degree, certificate or credential. We need to ensure that every adult who needs to re-tool or enhance their skills should be able to do so. We want every student to have the opportunity to transfer or obtain work that is meaningful and pays a living wage. After all, our students are this county’s future engineers, scientists, nurses, mechanics, lab bench workers and small business people. Your support is crucial to fcreating that next greatest generation. Thank you.