

# HOUSE BILL 284

F1, F5  
HB 834/17 – W&M

01r0778

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By: **Delegates Szeliga and Kittleman**

Introduced and read first time: January 20, 2020

Assigned to: Ways and Means

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## A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Education – Maryland High School Diploma – Civics Test Requirement**

3 FOR the purpose of requiring a student to take and achieve a passing score on a certain  
4 civics test to graduate from a public high school on or after a certain date; requiring  
5 the State Board of Education, on or before the first day of a certain school year, to  
6 determine the means of providing certain high school students an opportunity to  
7 take a certain civics test; requiring a student to correctly answer at least a certain  
8 percentage of the questions on a certain civics test to achieve a passing score;  
9 authorizing a student to repeat taking a certain civics test until the student achieves  
10 a passing score; requiring certain county boards of education to indicate on the  
11 official educational record of certain high school students whether the student has  
12 complied with certain requirements; requiring, on or after a certain date, certain  
13 alternative requirements provided by the Maryland Department of Labor for  
14 obtaining a Maryland high school diploma to include taking and achieving a certain  
15 passing score on a certain civics test; requiring, on or after a certain date, an  
16 individual to take and receive a passing score on a certain civics test to qualify for a  
17 Maryland high school diploma by examination; and generally relating to the  
18 implementation of a civics test requirement for a Maryland high school diploma.

19 BY adding to

20 Article – Education

21 Section 7–205.5

22 Annotated Code of Maryland

23 (2018 Replacement Volume and 2019 Supplement)

24 BY repealing and reenacting, without amendments,

25 Article – Labor and Employment

26 Section 11–807(a)

27 Annotated Code of Maryland

28 (2016 Replacement Volume and 2019 Supplement)

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
2 Article – Labor and Employment  
3 Section 11–807(b) and 11–808  
4 Annotated Code of Maryland  
5 (2016 Replacement Volume and 2019 Supplement)

6 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,  
7 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

8 **Article – Education**

9 **7–205.5.**

10 (A) ON OR AFTER JANUARY 1, 2022, TO GRADUATE FROM A PUBLIC HIGH  
11 SCHOOL, A STUDENT MUST TAKE AND ACHIEVE A PASSING SCORE ON A CIVICS TEST  
12 THAT CONSISTS OF THE 100 QUESTIONS USED FOR THE CIVICS PORTION OF THE  
13 NATURALIZATION TEST ADMINISTERED BY THE U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND  
14 IMMIGRATION SERVICES.

15 (B) ON OR BEFORE THE FIRST DAY OF THE 2021–2022 SCHOOL YEAR, THE  
16 STATE BOARD SHALL DETERMINE THE MEANS OF PROVIDING EACH HIGH SCHOOL  
17 STUDENT AN OPPORTUNITY TO TAKE THE CIVICS TEST REQUIRED UNDER  
18 SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION.

19 (C) (1) A STUDENT MUST ANSWER CORRECTLY AT LEAST 60% OF THE  
20 QUESTIONS ON THE CIVICS TEST TO ACHIEVE A PASSING SCORE.

21 (2) A STUDENT MAY REPEAT TAKING THE CIVICS TEST UNTIL THE  
22 STUDENT ACHIEVES A PASSING SCORE.

23 (D) EACH COUNTY BOARD SHALL INDICATE ON THE OFFICIAL  
24 EDUCATIONAL RECORD OF EACH HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT WHETHER THE STUDENT  
25 HAS COMPLIED WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THIS SECTION.

26 **Article – Labor and Employment**

27 11–807.

28 (a) In this section, “Program” means the National External Diploma Program  
29 adopted under regulations by the Secretary in consultation with the State Board of  
30 Education.

31 (b) (1) The Department and the State Board of Education recognize  
32 demonstrated competencies in adults, whether or not those competencies were acquired in  
33 a formal school setting.

1           (2)    **(I)**    **[In] SUBJECT TO SUBPARAGRAPH (II) OF THIS PARAGRAPH,**  
2 **IN** response to its recognition of competencies, the Department shall provide alternative  
3 requirements and methods of obtaining a Maryland high school diploma.

4                           **(II) 1. ON OR AFTER JANUARY 1, 2022, THE ALTERNATIVE**  
5 **REQUIREMENTS PROVIDED UNDER SUBPARAGRAPH (I) OF THIS PARAGRAPH SHALL**  
6 **INCLUDE TAKING AND ACHIEVING A PASSING SCORE ON A CIVICS TEST THAT**  
7 **CONSISTS OF THE 100 QUESTIONS USED FOR THE CIVICS PORTION OF THE**  
8 **NATURALIZATION TEST ADMINISTERED BY THE U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND**  
9 **IMMIGRATION SERVICES.**

10   **2. AN INDIVIDUAL MUST ANSWER CORRECTLY AT LEAST**  
11 **60% OF THE QUESTIONS ON THE CIVICS TEST TO ACHIEVE A PASSING SCORE.**

12   **3. AN INDIVIDUAL MAY REPEAT TAKING THE CIVICS**  
13 **TEST UNTIL THE INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVES A PASSING SCORE.**

14           (3)    The Department and the State Board of Education shall award  
15 diplomas to the individuals meeting the requirements of this subtitle.

16 11–808.

17           (a)    An individual may obtain a high school diploma by examination as provided  
18 in this section if the individual:

19                   (1)    has not obtained a high school diploma;

20                   (2)    resides in this State; [and]

21                   (3)    except as provided in subsection (b) of this section:

22                           (i)    is not subject to compulsory school attendance under § 7–301 of  
23 the Education Article; and

24                           (ii)   has withdrawn from a regular full–time public or private school  
25 program; **AND**

26   **(4) (I) ON OR AFTER JANUARY 1, 2022, HAS TAKEN A CIVICS TEST**  
27 **THAT CONSISTS OF THE 100 QUESTIONS USED FOR THE CIVICS PORTION OF THE**  
28 **NATURALIZATION TEST ADMINISTERED BY THE U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND**  
29 **IMMIGRATION SERVICES; AND**

30   **(II) HAS ACHIEVED A PASSING SCORE BY ANSWERING**  
31 **CORRECTLY AT LEAST 60% OF THE QUESTIONS ON THE CIVICS TEST.**

1 (b) An individual is not subject to the requirements of subsection (a)(3) of this  
2 section if the individual participates in a GED Option Program administered by the State  
3 Department of Education that creates a pathway to a high school diploma by examination  
4 for currently enrolled high school English language learner students under the age of 21  
5 years who have experienced interrupted education and have a lower level of English  
6 proficiency than their peers.

7 (c) The Department shall offer examinations to individuals who are pursuing a  
8 high school diploma under this subtitle at least twice each year at places throughout the  
9 State that are reasonably convenient for the applicants.

10 (d) The examination shall:

11 (1) be offered in appropriate high school subject areas; and

12 (2) be of a comprehensive nature as determined by the State Board of  
13 Education.

14 (e) An individual who fails an examination may repeat taking the examination.

15 (f) A current member of the armed forces is exempt from the residency  
16 requirement in subsection (a)(2) of this section and may earn a Maryland high school  
17 diploma by achieving a passing score on the examination offered under subsection (c) of  
18 this section.

19 (g) The diploma shall be awarded in accordance with the regulations adopted by  
20 the Secretary and the State Board of Education.

21 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect  
22 October 1, 2020.