



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 630

Education – Adult High School Pilot Program – Funding and Grants

Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

February 17, 2021

Submitted by Stacey Jefferson and Julia Gross, Co-Chairs

Member Agencies:

Advocates for Children and Youth
Baltimore Jewish Council
Behavioral Health System Baltimore
CASH Campaign of Maryland
Catholic Charities
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Family League of Baltimore
Fuel Fund of Maryland
Health Care for the Homeless
Homeless Persons
Representation Project
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Maryland Catholic Conference
Maryland Center on Economic Policy
Maryland Community Action
Partnership
Maryland Family Network
Maryland Hunger Solutions
Paul's Place
Public Justice Center
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Welfare Advocates

Marylanders Against Poverty

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Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) supports SB 630, which requires the Governor to appropriate money - \$250,000 in FY 22, and \$500,000 in FY 2023 – which can be used to provide grants to organizations to create pilot adult high school programs.

Funds for advancing adult education are critical. Too many Marylanders are still struggling to secure full-time employment and build economic security, especially as we struggle to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Adult education and effective workforce development are crucial to Maryland's ability to re-employ individuals who are out of work and to train new workers to meet the skills and qualifications that current employers demand. Without basic reading and math skills, adults are less employable, less civically engaged, and less involved with their children's schooling.¹ Access to job training, affordable adult high school options, literacy services, and continuing education are paramount to promoting productive functioning in work and in our communities.

The Adult High School Pilot Program creates an alternative pathway for adults to gain education who did not previously graduate from high school. Over 10% of adults in Maryland do not have their high school diploma or GED.² Folks without a high school diploma are three times more likely to be unemployed than college graduates, and when they are employed, earn \$8,000 per year less than folks with a high school diploma and \$26,500 less than those with a college degree.³ Adult high school programs are an essential lifeline for adult learners as they provide academic services in the pursuit of a high school diploma, opportunities for post-secondary education, job training, industry recognized credentials, and wraparound services that can address challenges. Adult high schools give the tools and skills low-income adults need to realize their career aspirations.

The Adult High School Pilot Program was created by legislation in 2017, but does not have dedicated funding. Unfortunately, the goals and promise of adult high schools in Maryland has not been realized as there is no dedicated funding for the pilot program. SB 630 requires the Governor to provide an appropriation to the adult high school pilot program, and these funds will be utilized to create adult high schools. This is a smart investment for the state: a qualified, educated workforce fortifies our state's economy and reduces state costs in safety-net programming, health care, and public safety.⁴

MAP appreciates your consideration, and urges a favorable report on SB 630.

Marylanders Against Poverty (MAP) is a coalition of service providers, faith communities, and advocacy organizations advancing statewide public policies and programs necessary to alleviate the burdens faced by Marylanders living in or near poverty, and to address the underlying systemic causes of poverty.

¹ Greater Homewood Community Center. (2014). *Adult Education*. <http://www.greaterhomewood.org/our-work/adult-learning-center/>

² US Census Bureau. American Community Survey. 2020

³ Alliance for Excellent Education. 2020. <https://all4ed.org/take-action/action-academy/the-economic-case-for-reducing-the-high-school-dropout-rate/>

⁴ Ibid