



Testimony in SUPPORT of SB0451

Adult Education - High School Diploma by Examination - Requirements and Study

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

February 12, 2025

Dear Honorable Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee,

CASA strongly supports Senate Bill 451- Adult Education - High School Diploma by Examination - Requirements and Study. CASA is a national powerhouse organization building power and improving the quality of life in working-class: Black, Latino/a/e, Afro-descendent, Indigenous, and Immigrant communities.

With a membership of over 173,000 members, CASA creates change with its power-building model blending human services, community organizing, and advocacy to serve the full spectrum of the needs, dreams, and aspirations of members. For nearly forty years, CASA has employed grassroots community organizing to bring our communities closer together and fight for justice, while simultaneously providing much-needed services, helping to ensure that low-income immigrants can live rich and full lives. For over a decade, CASA has provided first and second generation immigrant high school students with culturally and linguistically relevant leadership development as well as college and career readiness. For the last three decades, CASA has offered one of the state's largest nonprofit ESOL programs for working-class immigrants. CASA also works in partnership with local community colleges to provide vocational training that meet Maryland's workforce demands in professions such as electricity, HVAC, and childcare.

Senate Bill 451 advocates for the Maryland Department of Labor to allow an individual to take all components of the GED or General Educational Development Test in either English or Spanish depending on individual preference. Furthermore, the bill advocates that the Maryland Department of Labor study the feasibility and cost of offering the test in additional languages and to report its findings and recommendations to certain committees of the General Assembly on or before December 1, 2026.

This proposal would align Maryland with the equitable practices of virtually all other states that have been offering both Spanish and English versions of the GED since the test was updated in 2014. The current lack of language access has created significant professional barriers to adult immigrants seeking to reach their full professional potential and make the most impactful contributions to Maryland's workforce. Furthermore, the current lack of language access for the GED Test in Maryland is negatively impacting the professional potential of our K-12 youth.

Many immigrant students are joining our communities in their later high school years with English fluency creating a significant barrier to timely high school graduation, post-secondary enrollment, and employment in critical state industries.

As demonstrated by other state's implementation of the nationally recognized Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Project (I-BEST), many immigrant students do not have time to develop linguistic, academic, and professional skills in a linear manner¹. This is particularly true of our state's low-income residents. Professional, familial, and economic time constraints require that they instead develop multiple skills simultaneously in order to meet their full professional potential in a timely manner. The current policy of offering the GED Test exclusively in English means that many must first achieve English fluency and then pursue academic and finally professional goals. This is an unrealistic timeline for many individuals and creates further strains on the Maryland economy at a time when there are workforce gaps in critical industries such as teaching and healthcare. Providing the GED Test in Spanish is an equitable solution that allows Marylanders to develop multiple skills in a more efficient manner. It will remove a significant barrier to those who seek access to the careers that best match their talents and most impactfully contribute towards a thriving Maryland economy.

CASA respectfully asks the committee to consider the numerous advantages of SB 451 and submit a favorable report.

¹ [Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training \(I-BEST\)](#) ;

• [The Maryland Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Project](#)