



March 19, 2025

Ways and Means Committee  
The Honorable Vanessa Atterbeary, Chair  
The Honorable Jheanelle Wilkins, Vice Chair

Favorable with Amendment (FWA) Testimony  
SB451 - Adult Education - High School Diploma  
by Examination - Requirements and Study

Gregory D. Yancey, Esq., Chief of Staff

Greetings, Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and distinguished members of the Ways and Means Committee. My name is Gregory Yancey, I am an attorney, minister, and a state employee who currently serves as Chief of Staff for the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives.

To help pay my expenses as a law student, I taught Adult Literacy at Baltimore City Community College. I assure you that the most meaningful part of my work went beyond the money. I would run from my classes at Georgetown Law in Washington, DC to Baltimore City because of the joy and excitement that I had in seeing students of all aspects of the community conquer the GED barrier. Students often entered the classroom with a level of insecurity and shame for not having completed high school with their peers, yet I stood in awe to see the things that they overcame to give their education another opportunity. Many came from literacy deserts, failed school systems, and even foreign countries as refugees or asylees. There was a coat of pride and independence that graduates of the program wore when they completed the curriculum and passed the exam. From what I have seen and experienced, I concur with the Department of Labor in their strong support for SB 451 with an amendment to conform the bill to the language of its crossfile, HB 325.

SB 451 contains two key provisions: 1) requiring MD Labor to allow adults without a High School Diploma (HSD) to take all components of the high school diploma by exam either English or Spanish, and 2) requiring MD Labor, on or before December 1, 2026, to study the feasibility and cost of offering the examination in additional languages. I fully concur with MD Labor's amendment, (the language this Committee already included in HB 325 by replacing the

language on page 2, lines 22-25, with the following: ALLOW AN INDIVIDUAL TO CHOOSE TO TAKE ALL COMPONENTS OF THE EXAMINATION IN EITHER ENGLISH OR SPANISH).

By offering the RLA module in Spanish to Maryland's Adult Learners, we will be tearing down walls and opening doors. There are so many talented, intelligent, and employable people in our communities who cannot pass a preliminary job application screening because they lack a GED. The GED is also a gateway to numerous workforce training programs offered via local community colleges and various industry guilds. This bill would not only potentially increase tax revenue, it could also decrease expenditure. One's status as a GED recipient/high school graduate is often used as a milestone to determine the cessation/extension of child support and other benefits.

The agency which houses the GED, the Maryland Department of Labor, is best suited to conduct a study of any costs or burdens that this new policy will impose on the state and our educators.

The state offers a Spanish option for callers seeking access to the most essential agencies and fundamental programs. It is time to be fully committed to providing a Spanish option for secondary education.