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BILL: SB 451

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

DATE: March 19, 2025

POSITION: Favorable

COMMITTEE: House Ways & Means Committee

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The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four public school superintendents, **supports** Senate Bill 451.

This bill requires the Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor) to allow individuals to take all components of the high school diploma examination (e.g., GED) in either the English or Spanish language versions offered by MD Labor. Additionally, MD Labor must identify other appropriate languages in which to offer the GED and assess the feasibility and cost of offering the examination in additional languages.

Local superintendents strongly support this legislation's move towards a more equitable opportunity for Spanish-language GED test takers. The current requirement that the Reasoning Through Language Arts section of the GED be taken exclusively in English creates an unnecessary and significant obstacle for individuals who are otherwise capable of passing the GED exam.

Unfortunately, while forward-focused on so many aspects of public education, Maryland is the only state that still mandates passage of this English-only portion of the GED. Distressing data in Montgomery County revealed the inequities of this policy with students repeatedly failing this portion of the tests but passing other components of the test, in their native language, with much more success.

Proponents of the English-only option argue that it is necessary for the test taker to demonstrate English proficiency, but this proficiency is not an explicit requirement for the GED. It is important to acknowledge that language development is an ongoing process that can continue effectively as these individuals join and contribute to the workforce.

For these reasons, PSSAM **supports** Senate Bill 451 and kindly requests a **favorable** committee report.