

February 9, 2026

The Honorable Vanessa Atterbeary

Chair, Ways and Means Committee

131 Lowe House Office Building

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support for HB 297, Adult Education, High School Diploma Pathways

Dear Chair Atterbeary,

Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU) is proud to express our strong support for House Bill 297, Adult Education, High School Diploma Pathways, which is before the House Ways and Means Committee. This legislation expands and strengthens pathways for adults to earn a high school diploma, recognizing the growing need for flexible, accessible education models for adult learners.

Adult education is a critical lever for workforce advancement and economic stability. The National Center for Education Statistics reports that millions of adults in the United States lack a high school credential, and Hispanic adults are disproportionately represented among those without diplomas due to interrupted schooling, migration, and limited access to adult education programs earlier in life. Source <https://nces.ed.gov>. Without a diploma, workers face significantly lower earnings, reduced job mobility, and limited access to postsecondary training.

HB 297 addresses these barriers by expanding diploma granting pathways within adult education programs, allowing learners to earn a recognized credential aligned with workforce and postsecondary requirements. This approach acknowledges that adult learners often balance work, family, and caregiving responsibilities and need education systems designed around their realities. Research from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce shows that by 2031, nearly three quarters of jobs in Maryland will require education beyond high school, making adult diploma pathways an urgent economic necessity. Source <https://cew.georgetown.edu>.

Implications for Latino and immigrant Marylanders

For Latino and immigrant adults, HB 297 expands freedom and opportunity by creating realistic routes to credentials that unlock higher wages and career mobility. Adult diploma pathways support mixed status families, reduce intergenerational poverty, and strengthen local economies. MLU can support implementation by partnering with adult education providers to promote enrollment, advocate for language access supports, and connect graduates to workforce training and career pathways that build long term stability.

MLU urges the Ways and Means Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 297.

Sincerely,

Carlos Orbe, Jr.

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