

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2006 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**Revised**

Senate Bill 741

(Senator McFadden)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Ways and Means

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**Education - Task Force to Study Raising the Compulsory Public School  
Attendance Age to 18**

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This bill establishes a Task Force to Study Raising the Compulsory Public School Attendance Age to 18 to examine issues relating to an increase in the mandatory school attendance age. The task force must commence its work in November 2006 and report its findings and recommendations by December 1, 2007. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) must provide staff support for the task force.

The bill takes effect July 1, 2006 and terminates December 31, 2007.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** MSDE could provide staff support for the task force with existing personnel and resources. State officials assigned or appointed to the task force could participate without incurring additional costs.

**Local Effect:** Local officials appointed to the task force could participate with existing resources.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law:** A child who is 5 to 15 years of age must attend public school regularly unless the child is otherwise receiving regular, thorough instruction at an alternative

setting (*i.e.*, a private or home school). An individual who has legal custody of a child aged 5 to 15 and fails to see that the child attends school is guilty of a misdemeanor.

**Background:** According to data from MSDE, 11,064 students dropped out of school during the 2004-2005 school year. Dropout rates averaged 3.7% statewide and ranged from less than 1% in Frederick County to 11.7% in Baltimore City. These dropout rates are annual percentages and do not reflect the full number of students who drop out prior to graduating from high school. In 2005, 85% of Maryland public school students graduated within four years of starting high school. Graduation rates for local school systems ranged from 59% in Baltimore City to 95% in Frederick County. Four school systems – Baltimore City and Dorchester, Kent, and Wicomico counties – had graduation rates below 80%. Graduation rates and the number of students who dropped out last school year are shown for each school system in **Exhibit 1**.

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**Exhibit 1**  
**Graduation Rates and Numbers of High School Dropouts**  
**2004-2005 School Year**

<u>County</u>	<u>2005 Graduation Percent</u>	<u>Number of 2004-05 Dropouts</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>2005 Graduation Percent</u>	<u>Number of 2004-05 Dropouts</u>
Allegany	87.6	93	Harford	89.0	420
Anne Arundel	83.0	629	Howard	93.8	243
Baltimore City	59.0	3,356	Kent	76.6	49
Baltimore	84.8	1,662	Montgomery	91.4	919
Calvert	90.0	138	Prince George's	86.8	1,819
Caroline	80.2	43	Queen Anne's	87.7	85
Carroll	93.8	128	St. Mary's	87.0	163
Cecil	83.4	240	Somerset	81.8	51
Charles	84.7	330	Talbot	91.1	19
Dorchester	78.3	107	Washington	91.3	177
Frederick	95.0	115	Wicomico	78.6	180
Garrett	85.3	39	Worcester	88.7	59

Source: Maryland Report Card, Maryland State Department of Education

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In most cases, local school systems require verbal or written parental permission for a child under the age of 18 to drop out of school. More than half of the students who  
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dropped out, 55%, cited lack of interest as the reason, and another 15% said they were dropping out because of academics. School officials did not know the whereabouts of 19% of the students who dropped out and therefore did not record the reasons that these students decided to leave school.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** Bills to raise the compulsory school attendance age for all school systems have been introduced annually over the past four years, but all have failed.

**Cross File:** HB 36 (Delegate Pugh) – Ways and Means.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland State Department of Education, Baltimore City, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 13, 2006  
ncs/rhh Revised - Senate Third Reader - April 3, 2006  
Revised - Enrolled Bill - May 4, 2006

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