

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2017 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
First Reader

Senate Bill 458 (Senator Ready)  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

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Education - Foreign Language Requirement - Computer Programming  
Language Courses

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This bill allows a local board of education to authorize a student to satisfy a State or local middle or high school foreign language requirement by completing a course in computer programming language. The State Board of Education must adopt regulations that establish the computer programming courses that fulfill the requirements of the bill.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** None. The Maryland State Department of Education can identify and evaluate the courses and develop the required regulations using existing resources.

**Local Effect:** None. Local boards of education can choose to authorize a student to satisfy a State or local middle or high school foreign language requirement using existing resources.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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Analysis

**Current Law/ Background:**

*High School Diploma Requirements*

According to COMAR, to be awarded a high school diploma, a student must be enrolled in a Maryland public school system and have earned a minimum of 21 credits in specified subjects as detailed in **Exhibit 1**.

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**Exhibit 1**  
**Distribution of Credits Required to Graduate High School**

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Credits</u>
English	4.0
Fine Arts	1.0
Mathematics <sup>1</sup>	3.0
Physical Education	0.5
Health Education	0.5
Science	3.0
Social Studies	3.0
Technology Education	1.0
World Language <i>or</i> American Sign Language <i>or</i> Advanced Technology Education <sup>2</sup>	2.0
Electives <sup>2</sup>	3.0

Note: The credits must meet other requirements specified in the Code of Maryland Regulations. Elective programs and instruction must be developed at the discretion of the local school system, open to enrollment for all students, and focus on in-depth study in required subject areas, exploration, or application and integration of what has been learned. In addition, all students must complete a locally designed high school program of environmental literacy approved by the State Superintendent of Schools.

<sup>1</sup> However, beginning with students entering grade 9 in the 2014-2015 school year, each student must enroll in a mathematics course in each year of high school that the student attends, up to a maximum of four years of attendance, unless in the fifth or sixth year a mathematics course is needed to meet a graduation requirement.

<sup>2</sup> Alternatively, a student may successfully complete a State-approved career and technology program for four credits and one credit in an elective.

Source: Code of Maryland Regulations; Department of Legislative Services

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According to University System of Maryland (USM) [policy](#) in general the minimum qualifications for regular admission to a USM institution are (1) a high school diploma or its equivalent; (2) a high school grade point average of a C or better; (3) a score on a nationally standardized examination such as the SAT or ACT; and (4) achievement at the appropriate level of competencies in the core content associated with specified courses. A grade of a C or better in required courses normally demonstrates the minimum level of preparation for college-level work.

*Higher Education Admissions Standards*

As shown in **Exhibit 2**, generally to be admitted to a USM institution, a student must earn a grade of a C or better in two years of a language other than English, or in some instances

an advanced technology language other than English. Advanced technology is an instructional program in which students develop in-depth skills and understanding related to one or more of the following: impacts of technology, technological issues, and engineering design. At the time USM's policy was last revised in 2011, advanced technology education electives were acceptable in lieu of language at the following institutions: Bowie State University, Coppin State University, Frostburg State University, the University of Baltimore, and the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore. The USM policy advises applicants to consult the admissions office of the USM institution they are seeking to attend to determine if advanced technology is accepted in fulfillment of the language requirement.

St. Mary's College of Maryland admissions highly recommends foreign language study. Morgan State University requires two years of foreign language or advanced technology education for admissions. Community colleges are open enrollment institutions and do not have a foreign language requirement.

Private institutions of higher education and public institutions of higher education in other states set their own admissions requirements.

**Additional Comments:** The Department of Legislative Services advises that a student who takes advantage of the graduation flexibility that a local board of education may choose to grant under the bill will not meet the current minimum admissions qualifications at some institutions of higher education including the University of Maryland, College Park campus.

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**Exhibit 2**  
**High School Courses Generally Required for Admission to a**  
**University System of Maryland Institution**

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Year</u> <u>Courses</u>
English	4
Biological and Physical Sciences	3
Social Science/History <sup>1</sup>	3
Mathematics <sup>2</sup>	4
Language other than English or in some instances an advanced technology language other than English <sup>3</sup>	2

<sup>1</sup>The courses completed must be in at least two different subject areas. Two of the three must include a laboratory experience. For students interested in Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics (STEM) related careers (such as medicine, engineering, the sciences, veterinary medicine, physical therapy, etc.), four years of science are recommended in three different science areas, with three laboratory experiences.

<sup>2</sup>Must include Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II. Students who complete Algebra II prior to their final year must complete the four-year mathematics requirement by taking a course or courses that utilize nontrivial algebra. Nontrivial algebra is intended to mean that the level of mathematical concepts discussed and the level of problems that are used in the course would be at least as sophisticated as those that relate to problems appearing in the Achieve ADP Algebra II test. Examples of courses meeting this requirement include Algebra II, Trigonometry, Precalculus, Calculus and successor courses, Statistics, and College Algebra. An important feature of any such course is that it utilize algebra in a substantive way, so the student does not lose the algebraic and numerical skills achieved in earlier courses.

<sup>3</sup>The two units must be in the same language. American Sign Language is among the languages accepted.

Source: University System of Maryland [policy](#); Department of Legislative Services

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**Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** HB 1351 (Delegate Rose, et al) – Ways and Means.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland State Department of Education; University System of Maryland; St. Mary's College of Maryland; Morgan State University; Harford and Montgomery counties; Department of Legislative Services

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