Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2019 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 1211 (Delegate Rose, *et al.*)

Ways and Means

Education - Foreign Language Requirement - Computer Programming Language Courses

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 language courses that fulfill the requirements of the bill.

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.

Analysis

Current Law/ Background:

High School Diploma Requirements

With the advice of the State Superintendent of Schools, the State Board of Education must establish minimum requirements for issuing certificates and diplomas by public and private

high schools. Local school systems may establish graduation requirements beyond the minimum requirements established by the board.

Public High School Diploma Requirements

According to regulations, 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 **Appendix – State Public High School Diploma Credit Requirements.** Under the regulations, students must complete two credits of world language, which may include American Sign Language, two credits of advanced technology or successfully complete a State approved career and technology (CTE) program.

Maryland High School Graduation Task Force

In October 2018, the Maryland High School Graduation Task Force convened by the State Superintendent of Schools produced their final report. The task force recommended that successful completion of two years of the same language be required for graduation in order to align with the University System of Maryland (USM) admission requirements, which are discussed in more detail below. Some local school systems currently require two years of the same language to meet the world language requirement. The task force also recommended that the advanced technology option be phased out as an option and recommended retaining the CTE completion option.

The State board has not yet taken action on any of the task force's recommendations.

Higher Education Admissions Standards

According to USM policy, which was last updated October 2017, 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.

Each institution may admit, up to a maximum of 15% of its entering freshman class, students who do not meet the minimum qualifications outlined in the policy but who show potential for success in postsecondary education. Each institution must develop written guidelines concerning individual admission. For those instances in which applicants have not completed all of the required courses for admission, each institution must establish a

method of assessment by which a student can demonstrate competence, equivalent to having passed a required high school course, to qualify for admission.

Higher Education Admissions Standards

As shown in **Exhibit 1**, 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 most instances, an advanced technology. 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. According to their websites, two years of foreign language are only specifically required for admittance by two USM institutions: University of Maryland, College Park Campus (UMCP) and University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC). 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.

The St. Mary's College of Maryland admissions office 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 UMCP and UMBC.

Exhibit 1
High School Courses Generally Required for Admission to a
University System of Maryland Institution

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

[1]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 (known as "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.

[2]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.

[3]The two units must be in the same language. American Sign Language is among the languages accepted. Students should consult the admissions office of the institution they are seeking to attend to determine if advanced technology electives are accepted in fulfillment of this requirement.

Source: University System of Maryland policy; Department of Legislative Services

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: HB 1300 of 2018 received a hearing in the House Ways and Means Committee, but no further action was taken.

Cross File: None.

Appendix – State Public High School Diploma Credit Requirements

According to State regulations, 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.**

Exhibit 1
Distribution of Credits Required to Graduate High School

Subject	**Credits**
English	4.0
Fine Arts	1.0
Mathematics[1]	3.0
Physical Education	0.5
Health Education	0.5
Science	3.0
Social Studies	3.0
Technology Education	1.0
World Language *or* American Sign Language *or* Advanced Technology Education[2]	2.0
Electives[2]	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, be 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.

[1]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.

[2]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