

# HOUSE BILL 754

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CF SB 564

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By: **Delegates Guyton, Feldmark, Griffith, Hill, Ivey, and Wilson**

Introduced and read first time: January 31, 2020

Assigned to: Ways and Means

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## A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Education – High School Graduation Requirements – Students in Foster Care or**  
3 **Homeless Youth**

4 FOR the purpose of requiring a county board of education to waive high school graduation  
5 requirements established by the county board that are in addition to high school  
6 graduation requirements established by the State Board of Education for a student  
7 in foster care or who is a homeless youth under certain circumstances; prohibiting a  
8 county board from waiving certain requirements if the county board makes a finding  
9 that a certain student is reasonably able to complete certain requirements in time to  
10 graduate from high school; defining a certain term; and generally relating to  
11 graduation requirements for students in foster care or homeless youth.

12 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
13 Article – Education  
14 Section 7–205  
15 Annotated Code of Maryland  
16 (2018 Replacement Volume and 2019 Supplement)

17 Preamble

18 WHEREAS, The State of Maryland has a duty to care for and protect the children  
19 the State places in foster care, and as a matter of public policy, the State assumes an  
20 obligation to ensure the health, safety, and education of children in foster care; and

21 WHEREAS, According to the Department of Human Services, children in Maryland’s  
22 foster care system are regularly bounced from placement to placement and from school to  
23 school, including across county lines; and

24 WHEREAS, According to the National Foster Care Institute, a child who has  
25 frequent transitions often has education–related problems, including a loss of school  
26 credits, academic problems, and a delay in earning a high school diploma; and

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 WHEREAS, According to the American Bar Association’s Legal Center for Foster  
2 Care and Education, youth in out-of-home care lost approximately 4 to 6 months of  
3 academic progress with each change in school placement; and

4 WHEREAS, According to the American Journal of Education, high school students  
5 who change schools even once are less than 50% as likely to graduate from high school as  
6 compared to high school students who never change schools; and

7 WHEREAS, According to the National Foster Care Institute, national high school  
8 dropout rates are 3 times higher for youth in foster care than for other low-income youth,  
9 with only about 50% of youth in foster care graduating from high school; and

10 WHEREAS, The State Board of Education sets the minimum requirements for  
11 earning a Maryland High School Diploma, while allowing county boards of education the  
12 flexibility to set additional requirements for students to graduate from high school in that  
13 county; and

14 WHEREAS, A high school student in foster care who has taken the courses required  
15 for graduation in one county school system who is required to relocate to another county  
16 school system in their junior or senior year may be faced with additional graduation  
17 requirements at their new school with little time to complete those requirements in order  
18 to graduate with the rest of their class or cohort; and

19 WHEREAS, The key to improving outcomes for youth in foster care is identifying the  
20 specific roadblocks to their educational success and working to remove them; and

21 WHEREAS, It is the intent of the General Assembly that students in foster care or  
22 who are experiencing homelessness who move between different local school systems in  
23 their junior or senior year of high school improve educational outcomes by requiring these  
24 students to meet only the State requirements to earn a Maryland High School Diploma;  
25 now, therefore,

26 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,  
27 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

28 **Article – Education**

29 7–205.

30 (a) **IN THIS SECTION, “HOMELESS YOUTH” HAS THE MEANING STATED IN**  
31 **THE MCKINNEY–VENTO HOMELESS ASSISTANCE ACT.**

32 (b) The promotion of students in a public school and graduation from a public high  
33 school shall be in accordance with:

34 (1) [Policies] **EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN SUBSECTION (D) OF THIS**

1 SECTION, POLICIES established by the county board; and

2 (2) The rules and regulations of the State Board.

3 **[(b)] (C)** (1) Each student who graduates from a public high school shall  
4 receive the same type of diploma or certificate, regardless of the high school attended or the  
5 course taken.

6 (2) The diploma or certificate shall state that the student has completed a  
7 program of studies satisfactorily in accordance with the requirements of the State Board.

8 **(D) (1) SUBJECT TO PARAGRAPH (2) OF THIS SUBSECTION, A COUNTY**  
9 **BOARD SHALL WAIVE ALL HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS, INCLUDING**  
10 **REQUIRED COURSEWORK, ESTABLISHED BY THE COUNTY BOARD THAT ARE IN**  
11 **ADDITION TO THE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS ESTABLISHED BY**  
12 **THE STATE BOARD FOR A STUDENT IN FOSTER CARE OR WHO IS A HOMELESS YOUTH,**  
13 **IF THE STUDENT WHILE IN GRADE 11 OR 12:**

14 **(I) TRANSFERS INTO THE LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM FROM A**  
15 **DIFFERENT LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM IN THE STATE; OR**

16 **(II) TRANSFERS BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE LOCAL**  
17 **SCHOOL SYSTEM.**

18 **(2) A COUNTY BOARD MAY NOT WAIVE THE REQUIREMENTS UNDER**  
19 **PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION IF THE COUNTY BOARD MAKES A FINDING**  
20 **THAT THE STUDENT IS REASONABLY ABLE TO COMPLETE THE COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL**  
21 **GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS IN TIME TO GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL WHILE**  
22 **THE STUDENT REMAINS ELIGIBLE FOR FOSTER CARE BENEFITS.**

23 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July  
24 1, 2020.