

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2020 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

Senate Bill 564

(Senator Washington, *et al.*)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Ways and Means

Education - High School Graduation Requirements - Students in Foster Care or Homeless Youth

This bill requires a local board of education to waive all high school graduation requirements, including required coursework, established by the local board that are in addition to the high school graduation requirements established by the State Board of Education for a student in foster care or who is a homeless youth, if the student transfers into the local school system from a different local school system in the State while in grades 11 or 12,. However, the local board of education *may not* waive the requirements if the local board makes a finding that the student is reasonably able to complete the local high school graduation requirements in time to graduate from high school while the student remains eligible for foster care benefits. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2020.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill is directed at local school systems.

Local Effect: Local school systems can waive local graduation requirements for a student in foster care or who is a homeless youth who transfers as specified using existing resources.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: In the bill “homeless youth” has the same meaning stated in the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

Current Law: The promotion of students in a public school and graduation from a public high school must be in accordance with (1) policies established by the local board of education and (2) the rules and regulations of the State Board of Education.

Each student who graduates from a public high school must receive the same type of diploma or certificate, regardless of the high school attended or the course taken. The diploma or certificate must state that the student has completed a program of studies in accordance with the requirements of the State board.

The federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act defines a homeless child or youth as one who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

High School Graduation Requirements

With the advice of the State Superintendent of Schools, the State Board of Education establishes basic policy and guidelines for the program of instruction for public schools. Subject to State law and the regulations, bylaws, policies, and guidelines established by the State Board of Education, each local board of education must establish the curriculum guides and courses of study for schools in its jurisdiction. Policies, rules, and regulations for the graduation of students from Maryland public schools are established by local boards of education and the State Board of Education. The State Board of Education must establish high school curriculum and graduation requirements for all public schools in accordance with law.

In order to graduate with a Maryland high school diploma, a student must meet the credit, service learning, and assessment requirements set by the State Board of Education. Local school systems may establish graduation requirements beyond the minimum requirements established by the State board.

The most recently updated requirements can be found in [*Graduation Requirements for Public High Schools in Maryland*](#) published in March 2018. The current credit requirements required to earn a public high school diploma are shown in the **Appendix – State Public High School Diploma Credit Requirements**. In addition to the credit requirements, according to regulations, a student must complete an environmental literacy program. To meet the service learning requirements required by regulation, a student must either complete 75 hours of student service or complete a locally designed program in student service that has been approved by the State Superintendent.

Maryland high school graduation assessment requirements are not contained in statute. According to State board regulations, to be awarded a Maryland high school diploma, a student must meet the graduation assessment requirements. A student may meet the graduation assessment requirements in the following ways:

- by taking and passing the Maryland high school assessments (MHSA) in English 10, Algebra I, science, and government;
- by taking and passing approved alternative assessments for the MHSA;
- by successfully completing the Bridge Plan for Academic Validation; or
- through a waiver of the MHSA graduation requirement in certain circumstances.

Transfer Graduation Exemption Regulations

According to regulations, a student who transfers from one Maryland public high school to another during the second semester of his or her senior year (grade 12) who has met all requirements for graduation must be given the option of graduating from either high school by agreement of the local superintendent of schools or the respective local superintendent when more than one local school system is involved. Further, a student who enters a local school system in his or her senior year (grade 12) must be granted a waiver from locally established graduation requirements unless the student chooses to fulfill the requirements.

Local Graduation Requirements

For illustrative purposes only, in February 2016, the Maryland State Department of Education compiled information on [local graduation course requirements](#), which has not been updated. At that time, local school systems required between 21 and 26 credits to graduate high school. In general, additional credit requirements were due to different requirements for physical education, health, financial literacy, math, social studies, and career and technology education.

Background: It is documented that students in foster care and homeless youth graduate at lower rates. According to a 2013 paper by the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative, only 58% of students in foster care graduate from high school, compared to 87% of all 19-year-olds. Based on data from 44 states, according to School House Connection, the 2016-2017 average graduation rate for homeless students was 64%.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Designated Cross File: HB 754 (Delegate Guyton, *et al.*) - Ways and Means.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Education; Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative; School House Connection; Department of Legislative Services

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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

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Credits</u>
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 <i>or</i> American Sign Language <i>or</i> Advanced Technology Education ²	2.0
Electives ²	3.0

¹However, 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.

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

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.

Source: Code of Maryland Regulations; Department of Legislative Services
