

**Department of Legislative Services**  
Maryland General Assembly  
2025 Session

**FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE**  
**First Reader**

Senate Bill 451 (Senator King)  
Education, Energy, and the Environment

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**Adult Education - High School Diploma by Examination - Requirements and Study**

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This bill requires the Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor) to allow an individual to take all components of high school diploma by examination (*e.g.*, GED) in the language of their choice. MD Labor must identify other appropriate languages in which to offer the GED and study the feasibility and cost of offering the examination in additional languages. By December 1, 2026, MD Labor must submit a report on its findings and recommendations from the study.

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** The GED Testing Service currently offers the GED only in English or Spanish; no other languages are available. Thus, to allow individuals to take all components of the exam in the language of their choice, MD Labor would need to develop its own high school diploma by examination in languages other than English and Spanish. Although exact costs are unknown, general fund expenditures likely increase significantly as early as FY 2026 to develop and offer the test in additional languages. MD Labor can meet the reporting requirement regarding additional languages using existing resources, as explained below. Further, MD Labor expenditures for examination subsidies are likely not materially affected. Revenues are not materially affected.

**Local Effect:** None.

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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## Analysis

**Current Law:** A Maryland resident may obtain a high school diploma by examination if the individual is at least 18 years old and has not obtained a high school diploma. To qualify, the individual must have withdrawn from a regular full-time public or private school program. English language learners, as specified, are exempt from the requirement to withdraw from high school prior to obtaining a diploma by examination (including the GED).

MD Labor must offer examinations to individuals who are pursuing a high school diploma at least twice each year at places throughout the State that are reasonably convenient for the applicants. The examination must be in appropriate high school subject areas and be of a comprehensive nature as determined by the State Board of Education.

According to regulations, each module of the GED tests may be taken in foreign languages as available from the national testing service issuing the GED instrument, except as indicated. If a candidate chooses to take a module in a foreign language, the entire module must be taken in the same language. Separate modules may be taken in different languages if available from the national testing services issuing the GED instrument. A candidate who chooses to take one or more modules in a foreign language must take the Reasoning Through Language Arts (RTLTA) test module in English to demonstrate English proficiency. A candidate who obtains passing scores on the foreign language tests and on the RTLTA tests in English and who obtains the required overall passing score, must be awarded a Maryland high school diploma.

**State Fiscal Effect:** General fund expenditures increase to develop high school diploma by examination in languages other than English or Spanish. Exact costs cannot be reliably estimated but are likely significant.

MD Labor advises that it is actively working on updates to the regulations governing high school diploma by examination. These changes would allow test takers to complete all components of the examination in Spanish.

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## Additional Information

**Recent Prior Introductions:** Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

**Designated Cross File:** HB 325 (Delegate Wims, *et al.*) - Ways and Means.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland State Department of Education; Maryland Department of Labor; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 10, 2025  
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