

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2025 Session

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

Senate Bill 283 (Senator McCray)  
Education, Energy, and the Environment

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**Students With Financial Need - College Preparatory Programs - Exam Fee Prohibition**

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This bill prohibits, beginning in the 2025-2026 school year, a local board of education from charging exam fees to a student who is eligible for the free and reduced-price meal program related to (1) the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Program; (2) the Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) Diploma program; or (3) a program consisting of Advanced Placement (AP) courses offered by the College Board. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2025.**

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**Fiscal Summary**

**State Effect:** None. The bill is directed at local boards of education.

**Local Effect:** To the extent local school systems do not cover specified IB, Cambridge AICE, and AP exam fees for *all* students – including those who have not yet met the College and Career Ready (CCR) standard – eligible for the free and reduced-price meal program, local school system expenditures increase. Local school system revenues are not affected. **This bill may impose a mandate on a unit of local government.**

**Small Business Effect:** None.

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**Analysis**

**Current Law:**

*Post College and Career Ready Pathways*

Beginning with the 2023-2024 school year, each local board of education must provide all students who meet the CCR standard with access to specific post-CCR pathways at no cost

(including fees) to them or their parents. These pathways include (1) a competitive entry college preparatory program chosen by the local board of education, as specified; (2) a program that allows a student, through an early college program or dual enrollment at a student's high school and an institution of higher education to earn an associate degree or at least 60 credits toward a bachelor's degree; and (3) a robust set of career and technology education programs, as specified, that allow a student to complete specified credentials or apprenticeships.

The college preparatory program chosen by the local board of education may consist of (1) the IB Diploma Program; (2) the Cambridge AICE Diploma Program; or (3) a comparable program consisting of AP courses specified by the College Board.

A public high school must provide access to these programs directly or through another public school in the county. A student meeting the CCR standard must enroll in at least one post-CCR pathway, with counseling and advising services offered to help each student choose at least one pathway aligning with the student's goals. The State Board of Education (SBE) must adopt regulations that guarantee, to the extent practicable, statewide uniformity in the quality of the post-CCR pathways, meet the specified CCR pathway requirements, and grant high school graduation credit for the CCR pathway programs.

#### *Dual Enrollment and the Post-college and Career Ready Pathway*

To phase in expansion of dual enrollment to maximize the number of students who can earn the maximum number of dual enrollment credits consistent with the phased increases in school funding, SBE and the Accountability and Implementation Board, in consultation with each local education agency, may, for fiscal 2025 through 2027, limit the number and types of courses that a student dually enrolled at a public high school and at an institution of higher education may enroll in during the school year at the institution of higher education as part of the post-CCR pathways.

#### *College and Career Ready Funding*

In addition to funding for non-CCR and CCR students provided within the foundation formula, funding is provided for students who have met the CCR standard adopted by SBE. Per pupil funding, covered by both State and local shares, begins at \$517 in fiscal 2022 and is inflation adjusted each subsequent year. Post-CCR funding is based on the number of students in grades 9 through 12 who have met the post-CCR standard. Specifically, the fiscal 2026 funding is \$582 for each student in grades 9 through 12 meeting the CCR standard adopted January 2024. For fiscal 2026, this per pupil funding is providing local school systems with an estimated total of \$31.8 million in State funds and \$31.8 million in local funding to facilitate provision of post-CCR pathways to students

through the Blueprint of Maryland's Future funding formula. Fiscal 2027 funding is estimated at \$596 for each student in grades 9 through 12 meeting the CCR standard.

Each fiscal year, the State must distribute the State share of the CCR program amount to each local board of education. The local board of education must distribute to each school the minimum school funding amount for CCR, which is 75% of the per-pupil amount.

### *Dual Enrollment*

A public institution of higher education may not charge tuition to a dually enrolled student. A public school system must pay 75% of the cost of tuition for a public institution of higher education for its students. If there is an agreement before July 1, 2020, between a public school and a public institution of higher education in which the public institution charges less than 75% of tuition to a dually enrolled student, the local board must pay the cost of tuition under the existing agreement. The Blueprint for Maryland's Future – Revisions (Chapter 55 of 2021) expanded dual enrollment to include noncredit courses leading to an industry-recognized certificate or license.

**Local Expenditures:** To the extent that local school systems do not currently cover exam fees for *all* students eligible for the free or reduced-price meal IB Diploma Program, Cambridge AICE Diploma Program, or AP courses, local school system expenditures are likely to increase, potentially significantly. Current law requires the exams to be offered free of charge only to students who meet the post-CCR standard. There may be students, generally in the ninth and tenth grades, who have not yet met the standard who are taking these exams.

The actual costs depend on the number of eligible exams taken by eligible students and the availability of current waivers and discounts. However, school systems are already required to cover the cost of AP and IB exam fees for students in post-CCR pathways, so the net fiscal impact of the bill may be minimal.

According to the College Board, AP exam fees (excluding AP Seminar and AP Research) are \$99 per exam in 2025, with reduced fees of \$53 per exam for students with significant financial need, as specified by the College Board. Cambridge AICE exam fees range from \$127 to \$222 per exam, with no published fee reductions for students with financial need. IB exam fees are \$123 per exam in 2025, and no fee reductions are available for students who demonstrate financial need. The number of exams that would qualify under the bill and be taken by students eligible for free or reduced price is currently unknown.

Anne Arundel County Public Schools, Baltimore City Public Schools, and St. Mary's County Public Schools anticipate no material fiscal impact as it is standard practice for those local school systems to pay the exam fees for CCR students who qualify

for free or reduced-price meals. Baltimore County Public Schools advises that it uses a [universal fee waiver](#) to determine students who are eligible for services such as discounted or free SAT tests and waivers for dual-credit course fees. The universal fee waiver process considers a broad number of factors to determine eligibility, including family income.

**Additional Comments:** IB courses and related exams can be taken independently without completing the full IB Diploma Program.

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### **Additional Information**

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

**Designated Cross File:** None.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland State Department of Education; Baltimore City Public Schools; Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Baltimore County Public Schools; St. Mary's County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - January 28, 2025  
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