

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 836 (Delegate Conaway)
Ways and Means

County Boards of Education - College Preparatory Programs - Fees

This bill prohibits, beginning in the 2026-2027 school year, a local board of education from charging any fees related to the enrollment in or completion of a competitive entry college preparatory program consisting of Advanced Placement (AP) courses offered by the College Board. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill affects only local boards of education.

Local Effect: To the extent local school systems do not cover any fees related to AP courses for all students, 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.

Analysis

Current Law:

Post College and Career Ready Pathways

Each local board of education must provide all students who meet the college and career ready (CCR) standard with access to specific post-CCR pathways *at no cost (including fees) to them or their parents* (emphasis added). 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 technical education programs, as specified, that allow a student to complete specified credentials or apprenticeships.

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 Elections (SBE) must adopt regulations that guarantee, to the extent practicable, statewide uniformity in the quality of the post-CCR pathways, meeting the specified CCR pathway requirements, and granting high school graduation credit for the CCR pathway programs.

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 adjusted for inflation 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. 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. The fiscal 2027 budget as introduced includes \$30.9 million for post-CCR programs based on \$594 for each student in grades 9 through 12 meeting the CCR standard in spring 2025.

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.

Local Expenditures: To the extent local school systems do not cover any fees related to AP courses for all students, local school system expenditures increase, likely meaningfully. Actual costs depend on the number of AP courses taken by students and current waivers and discounts. School systems are already required to cover the cost of AP exam fees for students in post-CCR pathways, so the net effect of the bill may be minimal.

According to the College Board, AP exam fees are \$99 per exam in 2026. In 2025, approximately 121,000 AP exams were taken by Maryland public school students. The total exam costs for public high school students for AP exams amount to approximately \$12.0 million annually. Anne Arundel County Public Schools, Baltimore City Public

Schools, Frederick County Public Schools, and Wicomico Public Schools advise that they cover the exam fees for all students taking AP classes. However, Baltimore County Public Schools and St. Mary's Public Schools advise that they do not cover exam fees for non-CCR students.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See SB 82 of 2025; SB 283 of 2025; SB 455 of 2024.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Baltimore City Public Schools; Baltimore County Public Schools; Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Frederick County Public Schools; Wicomico County Public Schools; St. Mary's County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

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Analysis by: Caroline L. Boice

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510