

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 1077 (Delegate Miller)
Ways and Means

Education - Career and Technical Education - Workgroup to Study Tiered Stackable Credentials Framework

This bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Committee to jointly convene a workgroup to review the State’s high school curriculum, high school graduation requirements, and the post-college and career readiness (post-CCR) pathways established under the Blueprint for Maryland’s Future (Blueprint) to study and make recommendations on developing a tiered system of stackable credential pathways, as specified. By December 31, 2026, MSDE and the CTE Committee must submit a report on the findings and recommendations of the workgroup, including the need for any statutory or regulatory changes, to the Governor, the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee, and the House Ways and Means Committee. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: MSDE and the CTE Committee can likely staff the workgroup and produce the required report with existing resources, as discussed below. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: Under the bill, a tiered system of stackable credential pathways allows students to earn portable, industry-recognized certificates that build toward higher-level postsecondary education credentials and degrees.

In developing its findings and recommendations, the workgroup must:

- review and analyze tiered stackable credential models used in other states, including those of South Carolina and Arkansas;
- consider the feasibility of implementing individual student graduation plans, a flexible credit system, and a work-based learning capstone, as specified;
- examine effective methods for ensuring the portability of stacked credentials; as specified;
- consider the development of a uniform credentials of value list, jointly managed by MSDE, the Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor), and the CTE Committee with specified attributes;
- review and analyze stackable credential models designed to allow maximum flexibility, including specified models relating to stacking micro-credentials, transfer of credits across pathways, and a 1:3 credit rule for industry-recognized credentials.

Lastly, the workgroup must review the [Blueprint for Maryland's Future Interim Evaluation](#) report submitted to the Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) by December 1, 2026 to determine whether existing Blueprint CTE requirements are designed and being implemented in a manner that is aligned with the tiered system of stackable credential pathways studied by the workgroup.

Current Law:

College and Career Readiness Standard

The State Board of Education (SBE) was required to adopt a CCR standard as specified in English language arts, mathematics, and, when practicable, science. MSDE was required to develop and begin to implement a plan to publicize the standards by January 1, 2022.

It is the goal of the State that students enrolled in public school meet the CCR standard before the end of grade 10 and no later than the time the student graduates from high school. It is also the goal of the State that each student enrolled in public school, regardless of the student's race, ethnicity, gender, address, socioeconomic status, or the language spoken in the student's home, have equitable access to CCR and meet the CCR standard at an equal rate.

Each student must be assessed no later than grade 10 by a method adopted by SBE to determine whether the student meets the CCR standard. Meeting the CCR standard initially required a student to achieve the equivalent of a score of 4 or 5 in the mathematics and English portions of the Partnership for Assessment for College and Career Readiness

grade 10 assessments, on the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) grade 10 assessments, or any successor assessments. Statute required MSDE to conduct an empirical study of the interim CCR standard to determine whether the standard adequately measured students' readiness for college or careers. After completion of the required empirical study, the CCR standard was required to reflect the results of the study.

On January 23, 2024, SBE adopted a new CCR standard, informed by the study's results. Proficiency under the new CCR standard can be demonstrated in two ways. The first method is for a student who has earned a high school grade point average (GPA) of 3.00 or higher. Such a student must also earn a grade of A, B, or C in Algebra I, or score proficient or above on the Algebra I MCAP. The second method entails a student scoring proficient or above on both the English language arts 10 and the Algebra I MCAP.

These standards were expanded in the State board's adoption of a March 2025 [CCR Standard Policy Document](#). The policy document specifies that, beginning with the graduating class of 2030-2031, the Math Mastery option of the CCR standard is altered to define math mastery as at least either (1) earning a final course grade of A, B, or C in *both* Algebra I and II; (2) scoring proficient or above on the integrated Algebra statewide assessment; or (3) earning a final course grade of A, B, or C in an Advanced Mathematics Pathways course in which integrated Algebra is a prerequisite. The updated policy document also outlines a number of alternative CCR measures students may meet to be considered CCR ready, including meeting either:

- earning a one-year high school GPA of 3.00 or higher in their 11th grade or 12th grade year (with a grade of A, B, or C in a high school level math course);
- earning an A, B, or C in two dual enrollment or dual credit courses (one math and one English language arts course);
- meeting performance thresholds on at least two advanced academics (Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate programs) at any points in the student's high school career (one math and one English language arts, science, or social studies);
- meeting College and Career Readiness Benchmarks on the SAT, PSAT, or ACT;
- obtaining a score of "at Target" on both the math and English language arts Dynamic Learning Maps Alternate Assessments (for students determined eligible in accordance with the student's individualized education program teams);
- earning silver or better on the ACT WorkKeys National Career Readiness Certificate assessment;
- earn a State-approved Industry-Recognized Credential, aligned with CTE, or Comprehensive Arts pathway;
- completing a high school level of a registered apprenticeship program; or
- earning a score of at least 50 on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery.

Post College and Career Ready Pathways

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* (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 CTE 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. 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.

Career and Technical Education

Chapter 36 of 2021 (Blueprint for Maryland's Future – Implementation) created the CTE Committee as a unit within the Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB). The purpose of the committee is to build an integrated, globally competitive framework for providing CTE to Maryland students in public schools, postsecondary institutions, and the workforce. The committee is staffed by MD Labor. Chapter 36 also created the CTE Skills Standards Advisory Committee to make recommendations and provide advice to the CTE Committee on setting the occupational standards necessary for a strong CTE system. The advisory committee's recommendations must form the basis for a post-CCR CTE pathway required by the Blueprint.

State Fiscal Effect: MD Labor, which staffs the GWDB and its constituent CTE Committee, advises that the scope of research, coordination, and reporting required by the bill necessitates the equivalent of one quarter-time program manager to implement. The Department of Legislative Services (DLS) advises that this workload is likely absorbable with existing resources given the significant overlap with current efforts underway at MSDE, MD Labor, the CTE Committee, and AIB on issues relating to post-CCR pathways and stackable credentials (as discussed below).

Additional Comments: Both MSDE and MD Labor advise that some areas of workgroup study are already actively under exploration and/or implementation. Specifically, MSDE advises that (1) individual graduation plans already exist in Maryland regulations under

COMAR 13A.04.10.01 with implementation underway in partnership with AIB; (2) the CTE Committee has already explored portable credentials of value and their alignment to registered apprenticeship through its [2024 industry-recognized credentials policy](#), and MSDE is [actively implementing](#) approval of these credentials; and (3) micro credentials are a current policy priority of the Special Education Workgroup to AIB, which already made recommendations to develop micro credential programs for students with disabilities in its [Addendum to the Final Report of The Special Education Workgroup](#).

DLS notes that, although the workgroup has no statutory duties after it submits its report on December 31, 2026, it does not terminate.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: None.

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

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jg/clb

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