



HB284 EDUCATION - MARYLAND HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA - CIVICS TEST REQUIREMENT

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WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

OPPOSE

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Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) opposes **HB284 Education - Maryland High School Diploma - Civics Test Requirement**. This bill requires a student, in order to graduate from a public high school on or after January 1, 2022 to take and answer correctly at least 60% of the 100 questions used for the civics portion of the naturalization test administered by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS). Likewise, to obtain a Maryland high school diploma through the National External Diploma Program or through examination (e.g., the GED), an individual must meet this requirement. An individual may repeat taking the civics test until achieving a passing score. On or before the first day of the 2021-2022 school year, the State Board of Education must determine the means of providing each high school student an opportunity to take the civics test. Each local board of education must indicate on the official educational record of each high school student whether the student has achieved a passing score on the test.

AACPS supports local decision-making authority in developing curriculum and AACPS opposes efforts by the General Assembly to legislate curriculum, courses of instruction, assessments, or graduation requirements, firmly believing that this role belongs to local boards of education in conjunction with the State Board of Education. Accordingly, AACPS incorporates civics education throughout our curriculum – from elementary school to high school. In accordance with the Maryland Social Studies Civics Standard 1.0, our curriculum ensures that students will understand the historical development and current status of the fundamental concepts and processes of authority, power, and influence, with particular emphasis on the democratic skills and attitudes necessary to become responsible citizens.

In creating the State Board and local boards of education, the General Assembly has delegated to them the responsibility for guiding and delivering a high-quality statewide system of public education through State standards and accountability measures, and locally governed and administered curriculum, teaching, and learning. The program of studies in each school system is developed as a whole and aligned with the State and local standards and assessments. Accordingly, the authority to establish curriculum and assessments is the domain of the State Board of Education and the local boards of education. We are the same entities charged with the responsibility to research, investigate, and evaluate both curriculum and assessments. Legislation such as HB284, which seeks to interject piecemeal segments into the curriculum or to extract portions of the testing, only serve to weaken the effectiveness of the entire educational program.

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests an **UNFAVORABLE** committee report on HB284.