

BILL:	HB 284	DATE:	February 5, 2020
SUBJECT:	Education-Maryland High School Diploma—Civics Test Requirement	COMMITTEE:	Ways and Means
POSITION:	Information Only		
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EXPLANATION:

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is providing information for consideration regarding, **House Bill 284-Education-Maryland High School Diploma**—**Civics Test Requirement**, which specifies that to "graduate from a public high school, students shall take and achieve a passing score on a civics test that consists of the 100 questions used for the Civics portion of the Naturalization test administered by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services" beginning January 1, 2022.

The Naturalization test administered by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services Assessments includes 100 questions with predetermined and publicly released answers. This type of rote memorization assessment would be a significant divergence from the social studies assessments administered in the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP).

House Bill 284 proposes to add a new standardized assessment to the battery of assessments already administered to all students. Currently, the MCAP includes assessments required by both state and federal law. The federal Every Student Succeeds Acts (ESSA) requires annual statewide assessments in English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics in grades 3 – 8 and once in high school, as well as in science in each grade band 3-5, 6-8, and high school, and annual English language proficiency assessments in grades k-12 for all English learners. Maryland also provides alternative assessments written to the Alternate Standards for those students who required this accommodation. Lastly, MCAP administers the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment to the majority of Maryland's kindergartners. Maryland state law requires assessment in middle school social studies and high school American Government. The proposed standardized assessment in civics would be added to this overall assessment program and increase the fiscal and temporal imprint of assessment on instruction.

Civics is an essential component of Maryland's state standards. Social studies courses are structured so that students learn civics concepts beginning in pre-kindergarten through high school. Student achievement in civics is assessed as a part of the MCAP. Students are first assessed in middle school United States history then again in high school American government. Taking and passing the MCAP

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American Government or the alternative Bridge Plan for Academic Validation in American Government, is a requirement for graduation. The middle school United States history assessment will be included in the measurement of academic achievement on the Maryland Report Card beginning in 2022.

Crosswalks between Maryland's existing state tests in American Government and United States History have been provided to illustrate the redundancy between existing state assessments and the proposed Civics test. In addition to the overlap with existing state assessments, MCAP, unlike the proposed Civics Test, requires substantial student writing and demonstration of thinking skills while the naturalization exam does not.

If MSDE were to manage the administration of the Civics Test Requirement found in House Bill 284, the department cannot administer the exam in a method different for the other state graduation exams. The Civics Test would need to meet the same expectations for item development, test security, and psychometric validity as the MCAP assessments listed above. Differences between the two assessments include the fact that the Naturalization test administered by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services is pre-written and publicly available. Additionally, it is designed to be given orally, and not through an online multiple-choice format. There would be no field testing of items from the Naturalization assessment in order to gather metrics on their performance with student groups across the state of Maryland. Additionally, forms of the assessment would need to be created for students with assessment accommodations.

MSDE is committed to supporting the growth and expansion that occurs for our children through a comprehensive social studies education. We ask that you consider this information as you deliberate **House Bill 284.** For further information, please contact Tiffany Clark, Esq., Annapolis office: 410-260-6028 or Baltimore office: 410-767-0090 or e-mail <u>tiffany.clark1@maryland.gov</u>.