

JARED SOLOMON
Legislative District 18
Montgomery County

Appropriations Committee

Subcommittees

Education and Economic Development

Oversight Committee on Personnel



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 222
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
301-858-3130 · 410-841-3130
800-492-7122 Ext. 3130
Fax 301-858-3233 · 410-841-3233
Jared.Solomon@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Favorable Testimony HB 1208 – Task Force to Study Academic
Credit for Prior Learning in Higher Education**

House Appropriations Committee – March 16, 2021

Chairwoman McIntosh, Vice-Chairman Chang and Esteemed Colleagues,

Thank you for the opportunity to present today on my legislation HB 1208, a bill to create a task force to establish uniform standards for Maryland colleges to award credit for prior learning assessments like Advanced Placement (AP), College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), and International Baccalaureate (IB).

Many states and university systems have already established uniform policies to ensure that students who earn qualifying scores on these assessments are guaranteed credit at public colleges and universities. Thirty-one states have adopted uniform AP credit policies and 19 have established CLEP policies. Of the 31 states or large systems across the US that already have an AP policy in place, none of them have ever reversed their policies. These policies save students time and money, reducing both the time to graduation and student debt loads, while also reducing the cost for the state. Unfortunately, Maryland institutions do not have a uniform policy. Maryland can support its students and adult learners by deliberately and thoughtfully reviewing these assessments and implementing comprehensive standards for awarding credit for prior learning.

While this bill would encompass other programs, I'd like to focus a moment on AP. AP Exams are scored on a scale of one to five with a score of three recommended by the American Council on Education as a score for which college credit should be given. Research shows that students who score a three on at least one AP exam are more likely to enroll in college, more likely to major or minor in the area of their exam, more likely to persist to graduation, and more likely to graduate on time. Research also shows that students who pass an AP exam with a score of three and are placed into the subsequent course perform as well or better than students who took the traditional classroom course. In 2019, Maryland ranked 5th in the nation in AP performance with over 31% of the graduating cohort earning a 3 or higher on at least one AP Exam, and this number is likely to grow with the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future. If students were able to earn credit for these scores, the potential cost savings to the state's students and their families would be over \$84 million.

Presently, Maryland does not have a uniform AP college credit policy in place, which means that some students will not earn college credit for their scores of three. When colleges award credit

for only fours and fives it is often the students who need the credit the most who are left out. Fifty-six percent of low-income students who passed AP tests in Maryland scored a three; this number is 52% for African American students. When you look at “acceptable scores” granted credit by institutions across the state – there’s often little rhyme or reason. For example: Why is a three on statistics accepted at some community colleges and some USM institutions but not others?

I’d also like to speak briefly about CLEP, which is an appealing option for adult learners who would like to earn college credit for job experience. Earning credit through successful CLEP Exams is extremely beneficial to those who are juggling family, work, and school obligations. In fact, the U.S. Department of Defense has funded CLEP Exams for active-duty service members for over 50 years, helping our service men and women earn credit and placement. If Maryland joined the 19 states that already have a uniform CLEP policy in place, it would not only benefit our high school students, but the large number of returning veterans and active duty military service-members in our state. Also, with the large number of individuals that may be returning to higher education following COVID-19, uniform standards to measure prior learning will be even more important.

What Will the Bill Do?

The legislation creates a task force comprised of members from the state’s higher education community, including representatives from two and four-year public colleges and universities, to establish a uniform credit policy for prior learning assessments. The duties of the task force are:

- To develop and implement uniform standards for the awarding of credit for prior learning;
- To consult with faculty and college personnel to determine the type of credit to be awarded to students;
- To consider an AP Exam score of 3 and a CLEP Exam score of 50 as qualifying scores for credit unless evidence indicates that a higher score is necessary to ensure student success;
- To determine whether the credit is granted for general education, major, or elective requirements.

Each institution of higher education will:

- Adopt the standards as determined by the task force;
- Publicly post the policies on the institution’s website;
- Submit to the Maryland Higher Education Commission and the General Assembly annual reports indicating:
 - The total number of students awarded credit for prior learning
 - The total number of credits awarded;
 - The number of credits applied toward major requirements and the number applied toward elective credit.

The Task Force established by HB 1208 would study what credit should be given and would be composed of representatives from the legislature, higher education – two-year and four-year schools – as well as K-12. I am excited about the change this bill could bring and its positive

impact on Maryland students and families. Although the bill has a small fiscal note, the potential savings more than outweigh the costs. College-bound Maryland AP students in the high school class of 2019 who enrolled in a public institution potentially **saved the state over \$9 million in state funding** as a result of their success on 32,163 AP Exams with scores of three or higher.

I urge you to provide a favorable report on HB 1208.