

Dear Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. We are also working in collaboration with Out for Justice and Job Opportunities Task Force. I am a resident of MD District 9B and a professor of biology at Stevenson University. I write today as an individual citizen representing only my own views on education and its role in employment. **I am testifying in support of the Give Me A Chance Act (SB 66).**



The Give Me a Chance Act prohibits an employer from requiring information on high school diploma, GED, or secondary degree attainment to be provided at application or interview, nor use it as a condition for hiring or promoting an individual in the workplace, except in cases where such education is needed for specific occupational or professional licenses.

According to the 2020 - 2024 Local Workforce Plan for Baltimore City, between 2019 and 2025 there would be about 25,060 well-paying jobs whose typical educational requirements were a high school diploma or less, while 118,000 Baltimore City residents had a high school diploma and no college degree. Even if every single one of these jobs went to these folks (which is unlikely given competition with college educated folks and individuals from outside the city), this would give a **Baltimoreans without a college degree about a 1 in 5 chance of not earning poverty wages**. For folks without high school diplomas, this chance drops to 1 in 131. It's no wonder that according to the Census Bureau's 5-year estimates, Marylanders over the age of 24 with a high school diploma and those without were 3.5x and 6.3x more likely to be thrust under the poverty line than those with a bachelor's degree or higher.

The reality is that job searching doesn't work like it may have in the past. Computer algorithms can quickly filter out applications based on education, so that even a frontline HR employee (let alone a hiring manager) won't be able to see a candidate with dozens of years of experience in the field. For some older folks who have worked in a field for a long time, this could cause them to be competed out by individuals with less experience that have the money, time, and bandwidth necessary to attain a college degree. For example, when it comes to picking who you'd select as CEO of a computer company, you'd naturally think of someone like Bill Gates or Steve Jobs before you'd pick a recent 21-year old graduate with a Bachelor's in Business; however, the former two don't have a college degree.

Oftentimes decisions on what education can be arbitrary for example, the Bureau of Labor Statistics maintains a list of occupations with typical education requirements as part of their Employment Projections. Some examples of jobs that typically require a bachelor's degree include 1) interpreters and translators, 2) fashion designers, 3) fundraisers. Someone who was raised in a bilingual family may not need a 4-year degree to properly translate between their native languages. Someone who was raised in a family that had to make their own clothing is capable of designing something new. Plenty of folks have experience fundraising for boy scouts, charities, and other causes well before they are even college-aged.

To be clear, this bill does a lot of things to make the lives of folks without a college degree easier and puts checks in place that will yield employers getting the best candidates. What this bill does not do though is prohibit a job applicant from disclosing their own college education if they want, nor does it preclude those with college educations from using the connections and networks they currently use to get them in the door. Simultaneously, it won't make it any easier for employers who want to play personal connections in jobs they aren't qualified for, since there are no statewide regulations in place to stop that from happening now beyond existing occupational and professional licensing/credentialing requirements that aren't impacted by this bill.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote in **support of the Give Me A Chance Act (Senate Bill 66)**.

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Benjamin Fertig, Ph.D.

Wharff Ln, Ellicott City, MD 21043

Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore