

Dear Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

This testimony is being submitted by residents of District 46 who are also community leaders in Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore. SURJ is a group of community members supporting local groups working for greater racial justice in Baltimore and the State of Maryland. We are also working in collaboration with Out for Justice and the Job Opportunities Task Force. **We are 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.

Currently, almost all job applications ask the applicant's education level, and most jobs that pay more than minimum wage demand that applicants have a high school diploma or a bachelor's degree. Often it doesn't matter what the applicant majored in- a tacit admission that the applicant's education has nothing to do with their ability to perform the job. 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.

As a culture we've become so used to the idea of educational level as a shorthand for intelligence and ability that the idea of barring employers from asking about an applicant's education may seem strange at first glance. However, if you consider the matter objectively, attaining a college degree, especially, says more about the sort of resources a person has had in the course of their life than their capabilities. We all know persons whose educational pedigree has not stopped them from being terrible at their jobs. And there is a long list of prominent and successful people who did not attain degrees: not only numerous performers and sports stars, but businessmen like Mark Zuckerberg, Michael Dell, Ralph Lauren, Henry Ford, Richard Branson, and Walt Disney (these last three did not even complete high school).

Hiring does not work like it used to: computer algorithms can quickly filter out applications based on education, so that even a low-level employee who does the first pass through applications never sees a candidate who may be eminently qualified based on experience but doesn't have the "right" educational credentials. Using modern hiring methods, a 21-year-old college graduate would be a more likely pick for a tech executive than Bill Gates or Steve Jobs, neither of whom graduated from college.

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. Statistics show us that diplomas and college degrees lead to higher paying jobs and more success, but this is not because better education means better capability, it's because employers who pay decent wages and offer career advancement won't hire people who don't meet arbitrary educational minimums.

It is for these reasons that we are 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,

Lindsay Keipper

Brian Seel

Lilly Chapa

Liz Simon-Higgs

Holly Powell

Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore