

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. I am a resident of **District 40**. I'm a college graduate with a bachelor's degree in Biology, who is **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.

As a college graduate myself with a bachelor's degree in Biology, my first job out of school was for a program providing public education to Baltimoreans on how to save energy and get connected with free energy audits. There was a clear stratification in the teams of folks I worked with, where our public education team that interfaced with city residents at community events was almost entirely folks who weren't from Baltimore, but got the jobs because they all had Bachelor's degrees. The installation team had a mix of folks with many lacking a 4-year degree, a group of mostly folks of color that our boss at the time referred to as "not readers." The reality is that I didn't need to know how DNA polymerase works to tell people to fill up their fridge with water and use LED lightbulbs to save energy; however, due to our boss's bias that educational experience was worth more than actually living in Baltimore long enough to understand the folks we were trying to educate.

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.

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,  
Jonathan Smeton  
Baltimore, MD 21211  
Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore