

**Written Testimony Submitted for the Record to the
Maryland Senate - Education, Energy, and the Environment
For the Hearing on Adult Education - High School Diploma by Examination -
Requirements and Study (SB451)
February 12, 2025 - Favorable**

Dear Honorable Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee,

Free State PTA, (FSPTA) represents over 70,000 volunteer members and families in over 500 public schools. Free State PTA is composed of families, students, teachers, administrators, and business as well as community leaders devoted to the educational success of children and family engagement in Maryland. As the state's premier and largest child advocacy organization, Free State PTA is a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families, schools and communities and a strong advocate for public education. We are pleased to offer a favorable testimony in strong support of SB 451 - Adult Education - High School Diploma by Examination - Requirements and Study.

This legislation will provide language access to Spanish speaking Marylanders by allowing all part of the General Education Development (GED) exam to be offered in Spanish and for study on the feasibility of additional language options to be conducted. This aligns with the Free State PTA Principles for Action, which states that all children have a right to an excellent, equitable, education.

SB 451 will support the rising generation of multilingual professionals by providing Spanish as an optional language to complete GED examinations. The GED is designed to test a high school level understanding of math, social studies, science, and language arts. Out of the states that have similar GED guidelines as Maryland, all, with the exception of Maryland, allow the RTLA exam to be completed in English or Spanish, including Alaska and Hawaii. In Maryland, currently, an individual can take three out of four sections in Spanish, with the Reasoning Through Language Arts (RTLA) section being the only one required to be taken in English. Unfortunately, this requirement creates an unnecessary barrier for Spanish speaking examinees in obtaining their GED certification.

As demonstrated by other state's implementation of the nationally recognized Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training Project (I-BEST), many immigrant students do not have time to develop linguistic, academic, and professional skills in a linear manner. This is particularly true of our state's low-income residents. Professional, familial, and economic time constraints require that they instead develop multiple skills simultaneously in order to meet their full professional potential in a timely manner.

Individuals seeking to complete their GED certifications show a willingness to seek further education opportunities and a determination to use the resources available to them to succeed. Outdated policies should not hinder their success.

Therefore, Free State PTA urges the committee to provide a favorable report of Senate Bill 451.

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