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SB 451 - Adult Education - High School Diploma by Examination - Requirements and Study

Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

February 12, 2025

SUPPORT

Donna S. Edwards

President

Maryland State and DC AFL-CIO

Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 451. My name is Donna S. Edwards, and I am the President of the Maryland State and District of Columbia AFL-CIO. On behalf of Maryland's 300,000 union members, I offer the following comments.

SB 451 increases accessibility for individuals who wish to obtain a General Education Development certification (GED) by allowing test takers to take the exam in a language of their choosing. This legislation eliminates certain barriers that disproportionately affect those who speak languages other than English and create equitable opportunities for education in Maryland.

Many residents in our state come from diverse backgrounds who bring valuable skills and perspectives to our workforce. Currently, GED test takers must complete the Reasoning Through Language Arts section which is exclusively offered in English, hindering their ability to show their actual knowledge and skills. By allowing test-takers to complete the GED in a language of their choice, SB 451 recognizes that language proficiency should not be a determinant of an individual's ability to demonstrate educational competency and provides a fair path to earning a high school diploma.

The ability to obtain a GED significantly increases job opportunities and access to higher education, ultimately changing lives. Removing language barriers will empower more individuals to complete their education, contribute to our workforce and support their families. SB 451 is a necessary step forward in supporting multilingual learners and aligning with our values of fairness, inclusion and opportunity.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable vote on SB 451.