



AFT 340 AFL-CIO
Seton Business Park
5800 Metro Drive, 2nd Floor
Baltimore, MD 21215-3209

Senate Bill 451 – Adult Education - High School Diploma by Examination - Requirements and Study
Education, Energy and the Environment
February 12, 2025, 1pm

FAVORABLE

On behalf of the Baltimore Teachers Union (BTU), which represents thousands of dedicated educators and school staff in Baltimore City Public Schools, I submit this testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 451. This bill would allow individuals taking the General Educational Development (GED) test to complete all sections in the language of their choice, removing a significant barrier to educational attainment and economic mobility.

In Baltimore City, many of our students and their families speak languages other than English at home. We serve a diverse community that includes immigrants, refugees, and multilingual learners who bring valuable skills and perspectives to our classrooms and workforce. However, despite their knowledge and abilities, language barriers often prevent individuals from earning a high school equivalency diploma, limiting their access to higher education and better job opportunities.

Currently, GED test takers must complete the Reasoning Through Language Arts section of the test in English, even if they are more proficient in another language. This requirement unfairly disadvantages non-native English speakers, testing their language proficiency rather than their actual knowledge and skills. By allowing test takers to complete the entire GED in the language of their choice, SB451 ensures that all Marylanders—regardless of their primary language—have a fair opportunity to demonstrate their academic competence and earn a credential that can change their lives.

As educators, we know that equitable access to education is fundamental to breaking cycles of poverty and increasing workforce participation. Maryland has already taken steps to support multilingual learners, and this bill represents an important continuation of that commitment. It aligns with the principles of fairness, inclusion, and opportunity that should guide our state's education policies.

The Baltimore Teachers Union urges the committee to give SB451 a favorable report. This legislation is not just about expanding language access—it is about ensuring that all Maryland residents have a meaningful pathway to success, regardless of the language they speak.

The Baltimore Teachers Union urges the committee to issue a favorable report of Senate Bill 451.