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Budget and Taxation Committee

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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Senate Bill 451 Adult Education – High School Diploma by Examination –
Requirements and Study**

March 19, 2025

Madame Chair and Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

Maryland currently offers three different ways for Adult Learners to earn a High School Diploma outside of traditional K-12 school:

1. the GED® Test, which consists of four individual subject area exams,
2. the Adult High School Pilot Program,
3. and the National External Diploma Program®, a portfolio-based program.

GED® test takers are currently allowed to complete three of the GED® modules in English or Spanish but must take the Reasoning through Language Arts (RLA) module in English. Senate Bill 451 will allow adults without a High School Diploma to take all components of the high school diploma by exam in either English or Spanish.

The current requirement that the RLA section of the GED® be taken exclusively in English creates an unnecessary challenge for individuals who are otherwise capable of passing the GED® exam, and Maryland is the only state that still mandates passage of this English-only portion of the GED®.

English proficiency is not an explicit requirement for the GED® and we know that language development is an ongoing process that individuals develop throughout their lifetime. These individuals will have the opportunity to strengthen their English language skills as they join and contribute to the workforce.

Senate Bill 451 further requires the Maryland Department of Labor to study the cost and feasibility of offering the examination in other languages and reporting back to this committee on or before December 1, 2026.

NOTE: I am offering an amendment to conform bill language to the House crossfile.

This legislation will remove barriers and open doors to opportunities for all Marylanders and so I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 451 with amendments.