

My name is Julius Prezelski, and it's an honor to testify before the Maryland State Legislature in support of HB 943, which would make Financial Literacy a mandatory, stand-alone high school course. I retired last June after 31 years teaching Business and Computer Science at DeMatha Catholic High School and Mount St. Joseph High School. My ability to retire early wasn't luck—it was the result of applying lessons from *Get a Financial Life* by Beth Kobliner, a book that inspired me to teach Financial Literacy well before it became common.

Why is Financial Literacy important at the high school level? In my years of teaching, I saw how eager students are to learn real-world skills that prepare them for life after graduation. Everyday financial decisions—renting an apartment, buying a car, taking out a loan—carry lifelong consequences if handled poorly. By teaching practical concepts such as completing tax forms, choosing credit cards, and understanding investing basics, we empower students to make smart, confident choices that benefit their futures and families. That's why I believe a state-mandated Financial Literacy course is not just valuable—it's essential!

The main objections to making this course mandatory are usually lack of schedule space and the cost of implementation. I disagree. When my youngest daughter attended a Howard County high school, many seniors—including her—finished classes by noon, proving time isn't the issue. As for cost, it's zero. Numerous nonprofits and organizations provide high-quality, free curricula and teacher training. NextGen Personal Finance is a perfect example, offering everything schools need—at no cost.

A required financial literacy course levels the playing field, since not all students have parents who can teach them how to manage money, avoid debt, or save for emergencies. By making it part of the curriculum, we ensure every graduate—no matter their background—enters adulthood equipped to make informed decisions and build financial security. Schools already teach students to read critically and think scientifically; it's time we also teach them to live financially smart. Mandating financial literacy is an investment in our students' independence, our communities' strength, and our state's future. Ultimately, the question should be, "What is best for the students of all Maryland public schools?"

Sincerely,

Julius Prezelski  
Retired Financial Literacy & Computer Science teacher