



SB 70 - Adult Education - High School Diploma Pathways - GED Option Pilot Program and MDiplomaWorks Pathway

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

January 28, 2026

SUPPORT

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 70. This bill will expand equitable pathways to a high school diploma for Maryland residents who face barriers in traditional education settings.

The CASH Campaign of Maryland promotes economic advancement for low-to-moderate income individuals and families in Baltimore and across Maryland. CASH accomplishes its mission through operating a portfolio of direct service programs, building organizational and field capacity, and leading policy and advocacy initiatives to strengthen family economic stability. CASH and its partners across the state achieve this by providing free tax preparation services through the IRS program 'VITA', offering free financial education and coaching, and engaging in policy research and advocacy. **Almost 4,000 of CASH's tax preparation clients earn less than \$10,000 annually. More than half earn less than \$20,000.**

Traditional high school diploma requirements do not fit every student's circumstances. Many students who struggle to complete high school are not disengaged or unmotivated. Instead, they face challenges such as unstable housing, caregiving responsibilities, employment demands, or interruptions to their education. When these students fall behind, the traditional system often offers limited options to re-engage. SB 70 responds to this gap by providing a targeted pilot program that gives at-risk students a clear pathway to a diploma based on demonstrated skills and competencies rather than time spent in school alone.

The GED Option Pilot Program will allow Maryland schools to identify students who are most at risk of not completing high school and provide them with a supported pathway to graduation. This opportunity can reduce dropout rates and improve long-term outcomes for students who might otherwise join the workforce without a diploma, negatively affecting their future earning potential.

The MDiplomaWorks Pathway acknowledges that learning occurs in many settings, including classrooms, training programs, and workplaces. By allowing a combination of coursework, assessments, credentials, and work experience to count toward a diploma, the pathway aligns education with workforce expectations and supports students who are building skills while supporting themselves or their families.

A high school diploma is a gateway to stable employment, postsecondary education, and financial security. Importantly, SB 70 does not lower expectations; it offers different ways to meet them. Thus, reflecting a commitment to educational equity and economic opportunity.

We encourage you to return a favorable report for SB 70.

Creating Assets, Savings and Hope