
TO: Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment

BILL: House Bill (HB) 1274 – Education – Posthumous Diploma Awards – Authorized

DATE: April 1, 2026

POSITION: Support

The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) and the State Department of Education (MSDE) support House Bill (HB) 1274, which requires local school systems to award posthumous diplomas. MSDE recognizes the bill’s intent to provide a compassionate framework for honoring students who were members of their school community at the time of their passing.

House Bill 1274 authorizes, upon written request from a parent, guardian, or next of kin, the award of a standard high school diploma to a deceased student who was enrolled in a public school system. Importantly, the legislation clarifies that ceremonial diplomas do not confer academic rights or benefits and may not be included in graduation rate calculations.

The loss of a student is deeply felt by classmates, educators, and the broader school community. Schools serve as central places of belonging for young people, and when a student passes away, the grief extends far beyond the classroom. Establishing a clear process for posthumous recognition allows school communities to honor the student’s place among their peers while offering a meaningful gesture of remembrance and support to families.

By excluding posthumous awards from graduation-rate calculations, the legislation ensures that recognition of deceased students does not affect statewide accountability metrics. In this way, HB1274 appropriately balances compassion and accountability. The Department stands ready to provide routine guidance to local school systems as needed to support consistent interpretation of the statute.

The State Board and MSDE extend their support to **HB1274** and appreciate the General Assembly’s consideration of legislation that honors students and families while maintaining the integrity of Maryland’s diploma and accountability systems. For further information, please contact Laurel Cratsley, Interim Executive Director of Government Affairs, at laurel.cratsley@maryland.gov.