

BILL: House Bill 1503
TITLE: Adult Education – GED Testing Fees – Exemption for Homeless Youth
DATE: March 7, 2016
POSITION: SUPPORT
COMMITTEE: Economic Matters Committee
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The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the State's local boards of education, supports House Bill 1503. MABE supports this legislation to ensure free access for homeless youth, as defined in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, to the GED test.

MABE and the local boards we represent fully support efforts to better serve homeless students. Maryland has adopted detailed regulations regarding “Programs for Homeless Children”, in accordance with the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act as amended by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

Regulations applying to Maryland’s public schools require that school systems provide homeless children and youth with access to the education and other services that they need to ensure that they have an opportunity to meet the same challenging State student academic achievement standards to which all students are held. Further, homeless children and youth, while receiving a free public education, may not be segregated in a separate school or in a separate program within a school, based on their status as homeless. Homeless children and youth shall be educated as part of a school’s regular academic program (COMAR 13A.05.09.01).

Maryland regulations define a homeless student as a child or youth who lacks a fixed, regular, or adequate nighttime place of residence. These regulations were amended in 2009 to expand the definition of homeless student to include a child temporarily placed in a facility for reasons such as awaiting foster care placement; temporarily placed in facilities such as emergency shelters, psychiatric facilities; or other temporary, short-term placements.

The GED test is a well-recognized high school diploma equivalency examination, and a gateway to admission to professional certification and licensure programs. House Bill 1503 will contribute to the prospects for homeless youth to embark on a lifetime of learning – and earning – that will benefit themselves and the entire state.

For these reasons, MABE requests a favorable report on House Bill 1503.