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**BILL:** House Bill 284  
**TITLE:** Education - Maryland High School Diploma - Civics Test Requirement  
**POSITION:** OPPOSE  
**DATE:** February 5, 2020  
**COMMITTEE:** Ways and Means Committee  
**CONTACT:** John R. Woolums, Esq.

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all of the State's local boards of education, opposes House Bill 284, which would mandate that in order to receive a Maryland diploma and graduate from high school each student would be required to pass a statewide civics test.

Generally, MABE opposes efforts by the General Assembly to legislate curriculum, courses of instruction, assessments, or graduation requirements, firmly believing that this role belongs to local boards of education in conjunction with the State Board of Education. Exceptions to this rule are rare. In creating the State Board and local boards of education, the General Assembly has delegated to them the responsibility for guiding and delivering a high quality statewide system of public education through state standards and accountability measures, and locally governed and administered curriculum, teaching, and learning.

Maryland continues to implement statewide student assessments aligned with the Common Core and Maryland's College and Career Readiness Standards, now moving on from administering the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessments to the new Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) tests.

In Maryland, the NCLB-mandated tests were referred to as the Maryland School Assessments (MSAs), with the exception of the high school level tests in reading (English), math (Algebra), and science (Biology), which were referred to as High School Assessments (HSAs). For many years these three HSAs served two purposes: as components of the federal accountability requirements, and as components of the state diploma requirements adopted by the State Board of Education in regulation. Under the newer MCAP program, the Algebra and English assessments are the same, and the science assessment has been transitioning to the Maryland Integrated Science Assessment (MISA).

The fourth high school level assessment required for graduation has been in Government, and this assessment has no corresponding federal mandate. As a non-mandated assessment, funding for the Government HSA was eliminated in the FY 2012 state budget submitted by the Governor and the test was not administered in the 2011-2012 school year. 2012 legislation, sponsored by the Senate President and Speaker of the House, was enacted to restore the Government HSA as a graduation requirement beginning with students entering grade 9 in 2013-2014 (SB 293/HB 1227, Chapters 476/477, 2012 Laws of Maryland).

During the transition from the previous HSA program to PARCC, and again to MCAP, high school students were not required to pass the exams in English/Language Arts, Algebra, or science as high stakes graduation requirements until the reliability and validity of the newer versions of these tests could be established over time. However, the Government assessment has continued to be administered as a high stakes graduation requirement. In this light, MABE is confident that the Government assessment will remain a rigorous and meaningful component of Maryland's high school level comprehensive assessment program.

For these reasons, MABE requests an unfavorable report on House Bill 284.