



Legislation Text

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INTRODUCTORY*

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL R
(Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Clarke

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning
Informational Hearing and Roundtable Discussion on Developments Affecting the Education of Older Teens and Young Adults in Baltimore City

FOR the purpose of assessing the status and efficiency of Maryland's GED program in Baltimore City; determining the impact of Senate Bill 362's increase to 18 of the age for mandatory education in Maryland and the local school system's "adult education" plans to attract, retain and successfully educate these older students; and examining the State's blueprint for adopting a GED Options Program in response to the SB 362 mandate.

WHEREAS, We in Baltimore, Maryland, are at a crossroads in determining our State's and City's capacity to attract, retain and educate a "disconnected" segment of our older teens and young adults so as to prepare them for living wage jobs and challenging careers and to lay the groundwork for our own successful future as a society.

WHEREAS, That "disconnected" segment includes actual and potential high school drop-outs who, for a universe of reasons, will not or cannot currently complete even the most basic high school equivalency requirements, their obstacles running the gamut from histories of academic failure and the disruptions of periodic incarceration and homelessness to caretaker responsibilities for dependent siblings and job responsibilities to support themselves and often their entire families.

WHEREAS, The crossroads is a confluence of changes directly affecting this key segment of our population, i.e.:

- a 2009 change of administrative jurisdiction for the General Equivalency Diploma (GED) testing program from the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to the Maryland Department of Licensing and Regulation (DLLR);
- Senate Bill 362, popularly supported and approved into law by the Maryland General Assembly, which increases from 16 to 18 the age at which Maryland's youth are required to attend a public school regularly during the entire school year;
- the presumed expansion and redesign of alternative programs within the Baltimore City Public Schools

(BCPS) to accommodate and successfully educate the older cohort of teens required by 2014 to attend public school regularly or risk breaking the law; and,

· a proposed GED Options Program, evolving from the SB 362 mandate, which MSDE and DLLR must prepare by December 1, 2012, to help older students combine the benefits of traditional high school and GED enrollment.

WHEREAS, The transfer of GED training from MSDE to DLLR occurred with an unfair lack of resources for DLLR to address such major new educational responsibilities. In a program designed to expedite the academic process, GED students have experienced delays in scheduling their tests, sometimes for five or six months, and delays in receiving test results, generally experiencing a two month wait in which community college enrollment and job options must be placed "on hold" .

WHEREAS, It is crucial for Baltimore City residents, students, and officials to determine how the State of Maryland and DLLR will restore GED to the efficiency and expediency inherent in its attraction to older teens and adult enrollees.

WHEREAS, It is crucial for Baltimore City residents, students, and officials to understand how BCPS plans to "make good" on the long-requested and now imminent increase in the legal age for mandatory school attendance. For all the long-term benefits of this change, many older teens will consider themselves the "captive audience" of this mandate. The challenge is to meet this new population halfway, as the adult learners we aspire for them to become.

WHEREAS, Finally, it is crucial for Baltimore City residents, students, and officials to explore with MSDE, DLLR, and BCPS their proposal for the GED Options Program and its potential for bridging legal divides which deprive both enrollees of GEDs, and our Local Education District (LED) of the mutual benefits of complementary education pathways.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE, that this body most urgently seeks information to determine how the State of Maryland plans to enhance the DLLR's operation of the GED program to better and more expeditiously serve our city residents; to learn about BCPS's plans for the "adult education" required to attract, retain, and successfully educate SB 362's new cohort of older teens within its alternative education construct; and, to better understand the GED Options proposals being developed by MSDE, DLLR, and BCPS for a better mesh of GED with LED's.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this body applauds the dedicated efforts of education, governmental, and non-profit organizations throughout the City who provide GED and alternative learning classes for older teens and adults, including The Community School in Remington, Baltimore Reads, Inc., South Baltimore Learning Center, Baltimore City Community College, and the Mayor's Office of Employment Development.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That representatives of DLLR, MSDE and BCPS are cordially invited to participate in this hearing to present their plans and aspirations to the City Council and that representatives of alternative and GED programs are likewise invited to participate and testify.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Superintendent of the Maryland State Department of Education, the Director of the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation, the CEO of the Baltimore City Public Schools, the directors of those alternative and GED programs listed in this resolution, the Mayor, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the Baltimore City Council.

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