

Department of Legislative Services  
Maryland General Assembly  
2008 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE  
Revised

Senate Bill 264

(Senator Pugh, *et al.*)

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Ways and Means

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High School Dropouts - Alternative Education Programs and GED  
Requirements

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This bill requires the appropriate representative of a local board of education to provide, to the extent practicable, information on alternative education and General Educational Development (GED) programs to each individual who has dropped out of high school.

The bill takes effect October 1, 2008 and only applies to students who drop out of high school after the effective date.

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Fiscal Summary

**State Effect:** None. The bill's requirements are directed at local boards of education.

**Local Effect:** None. Local school systems generally provide the required information to students withdrawing from high school.

**Small Business Effect:** Minimal.

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Analysis

**Current Law:** Local school systems are not specifically required to provide alternative education and GED information to high school dropouts. Dropout prevention and alternative education programs are established locally by each school system.

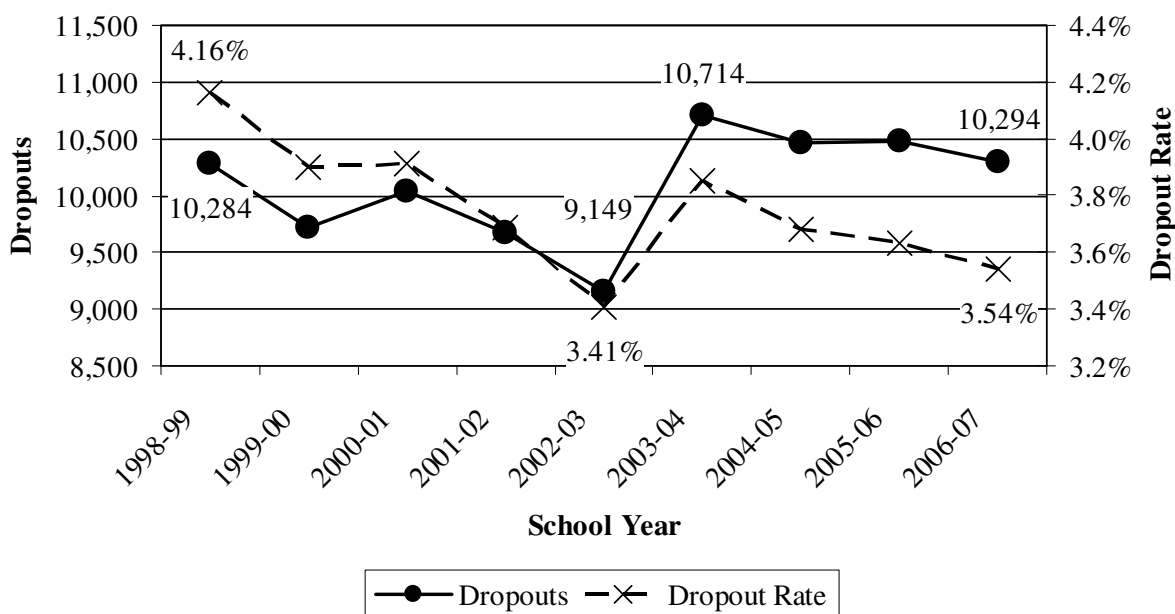
A Maryland resident may obtain a GED by examination if the individual is at least age 16 and has not obtained a high school certificate or diploma. To qualify, the individual must

also have officially withdrawn from a regular public or private school at least three months prior to the date of GED testing.

The External Diploma Program is an alternative way for adults to earn high school diplomas.

**Background:** An average of more than 10,000 students per year dropped out of Maryland public high schools from the 1998-1999 school year to the 2006-2007 school year. **Exhibit 1** charts the number of dropouts over this span and also shows the reported dropout rate for each year. The exhibit shows that the number and rate of dropouts trended downward through the 2002-2003 school year before spiking the following year. Although the dropout numbers have been higher in the more recent years, high school enrollment has also increased during this period. For this reason, dropout rates have declined from the 4.2% rate experienced in 1998-1999.

**Exhibit 1**  
**Numbers of Dropouts and Dropout Rates**  
**1998-99 to 2006-07 School Years**



Source: Maryland State Department of Education

The Maryland State Department of Education advises that it is the current practice of local school systems to provide information on available alternative education options to students withdrawing from high schools. A statistical report from MSDE counts 59

alternative centers among Maryland's 1,455 public schools, including at least one in 17 of the 24 local school systems.

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### **Additional Information**

**Prior Introductions:** None.

**Cross File:** HB 953 (Delegate Hixson, *et al.*) – Ways and Means.

**Information Source(s):** Maryland State Department of Education, Department of Legislative Services

**Fiscal Note History:** First Reader - February 12, 2008  
mll/rhh Revised - Senate Third Reader - March 24, 2008  
Revised - Enrolled Bill - May 12, 2008

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Analysis by: Mark W. Collins

Direct Inquiries to:  
(410) 946-5510  
(301) 970-5510