

HOUSE BILL 754

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CF SB 564

By: **Delegates Guyton, Feldmark, Griffith, Hill, Ivey, and Wilson**

Introduced and read first time: January 31, 2020

Assigned to: Ways and Means

Committee Report: Favorable with amendments

House action: Adopted

Read second time: March 13, 2020

CHAPTER _____

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Education – High School Graduation Requirements – Students in Foster Care or**
3 **Homeless Youth**

4 FOR the purpose of requiring a county board of education to waive high school graduation
5 requirements established by the county board that are in addition to high school
6 graduation requirements established by the State Board of Education for a student
7 in foster care or who is a homeless youth under certain circumstances; prohibiting a
8 county board from waiving certain requirements if the county board makes a finding
9 that a certain student is reasonably able to complete certain requirements in time to
10 graduate from high school; defining a certain term; and generally relating to
11 graduation requirements for students in foster care or homeless youth.

12 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
13 Article – Education
14 Section 7–205
15 Annotated Code of Maryland
16 (2018 Replacement Volume and 2019 Supplement)

17 Preamble

18 WHEREAS, The State of Maryland has a duty to care for and protect the children
19 the State places in foster care, and as a matter of public policy, the State assumes an
20 obligation to ensure the health, safety, and education of children in foster care; and

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.



1 WHEREAS, According to the Department of Human Services, children in Maryland's
2 foster care system are regularly bounced from placement to placement and from school to
3 school, including across county lines; and

4 WHEREAS, According to the National Foster Care Institute, a child who has
5 frequent transitions often has education-related problems, including a loss of school
6 credits, academic problems, and a delay in earning a high school diploma; and

7 WHEREAS, According to the American Bar Association's Legal Center for Foster
8 Care and Education, youth in out-of-home care lost approximately 4 to 6 months of
9 academic progress with each change in school placement; and

10 WHEREAS, According to the American Journal of Education, high school students
11 who change schools even once are less than 50% as likely to graduate from high school as
12 compared to high school students who never change schools; and

13 WHEREAS, According to the National Foster Care Institute, national high school
14 dropout rates are 3 times higher for youth in foster care than for other low-income youth,
15 with only about 50% of youth in foster care graduating from high school; and

16 WHEREAS, The State Board of Education sets the minimum requirements for
17 earning a Maryland High School Diploma, while allowing county boards of education the
18 flexibility to set additional requirements for students to graduate from high school in that
19 county; and

20 WHEREAS, A high school student in foster care who has taken the courses required
21 for graduation in one county school system who is required to relocate to another county
22 school system in their junior or senior year may be faced with additional graduation
23 requirements at their new school with little time to complete those requirements in order
24 to graduate with the rest of their class or cohort; and

25 WHEREAS, The key to improving outcomes for youth in foster care is identifying the
26 specific roadblocks to their educational success and working to remove them; and

27 WHEREAS, It is the intent of the General Assembly that students in foster care or
28 who are experiencing homelessness who move between different local school systems in
29 their junior or senior year of high school improve educational outcomes by requiring these
30 students to meet only the State requirements to earn a Maryland High School Diploma;
31 now, therefore,

32 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
33 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

34 **Article – Education**

35 7–205.

1 (a) IN THIS SECTION, "HOMELESS YOUTH" HAS THE MEANING STATED IN
2 THE MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS ASSISTANCE ACT.

3 (B) The promotion of students in a public school and graduation from a public high
4 school shall be in accordance with:

5 (1) [Policies] EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN SUBSECTION (D) OF THIS
6 SECTION, POLICIES established by the county board; and

7 (2) The rules and regulations of the State Board.

8 [(b)] (C) (1) Each student who graduates from a public high school shall
9 receive the same type of diploma or certificate, regardless of the high school attended or the
10 course taken.

11 (2) The diploma or certificate shall state that the student has completed a
12 program of studies satisfactorily in accordance with the requirements of the State Board.

13 (D) (1) SUBJECT TO PARAGRAPH (2) OF THIS SUBSECTION, A COUNTY
14 BOARD SHALL WAIVE ALL HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS, INCLUDING
15 REQUIRED COURSEWORK, ESTABLISHED BY THE COUNTY BOARD THAT ARE IN
16 ADDITION TO THE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS ESTABLISHED BY
17 THE STATE BOARD FOR A STUDENT IN FOSTER CARE OR WHO IS A HOMELESS YOUTH,
18 IF THE STUDENT WHILE IN GRADE 11 OR 12:

19 ~~(I) TRANSFERS~~ TRANSFERS INTO THE LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM
20 FROM A DIFFERENT LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM IN THE STATE; ~~OR~~

21 ~~(II) TRANSFERS BETWEEN HIGH SCHOOLS IN THE LOCAL~~
22 ~~SCHOOL SYSTEM.~~

23 (2) A COUNTY BOARD MAY NOT WAIVE THE REQUIREMENTS UNDER
24 PARAGRAPH (1) OF THIS SUBSECTION IF THE COUNTY BOARD MAKES A FINDING
25 THAT THE STUDENT IS REASONABLY ABLE TO COMPLETE THE COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL
26 GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS IN TIME TO GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL WHILE
27 THE STUDENT REMAINS ELIGIBLE FOR FOSTER CARE BENEFITS.

28 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July
29 1, 2020.