

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 1274
Ways and Means

(Delegate Miller)

Education - Posthumous Diploma Awards - Authorized

This bill authorizes a local school system to award a standard high school diploma, a posthumous honorary diploma, or an *in memoriam* diploma to a deceased student who meets specified eligibility criteria. The bill establishes conditions under which each type of diploma may be awarded, requires a local school system to determine credit thresholds for posthumous standard and honorary diplomas, and requires that a diploma be awarded only upon written request of a parent, legal guardian, or next of kin. Posthumous and *in memoriam* diplomas awarded under the bill are ceremonial and do not confer legal rights associated with academic completion. Any diploma awarded under the bill may not be included in graduation rate calculations. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill applies only to local school systems.

Local Effect: Local school system expenditures may increase minimally to process requests and issue posthumous diplomas; however, any costs are expected to be absorbable within existing resources. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary:

Standard High School Diploma (Posthumous)

A local school system may award a standard high school diploma to a deceased student who, at the time of death: (1) was a resident of the county; (2) was enrolled in grade 12 in a public school; (3) was within a certain number of credits of completing the credits required for graduation; and (4) was in good academic standing. A diploma awarded under

this provision is the same diploma awarded under current law to students who graduate from a public high school.

Posthumous Honorary Diploma

A local school system may award a posthumous honorary diploma to a deceased student who, at the time of death: (1) was a resident of the county; (2) was enrolled in grade 11 or 12 in a public school; and (3) was within a certain number of credits of completing graduation requirements. A posthumous honorary diploma is ceremonial in nature.

In Memoriam Diploma

A local school system may award an *in memoriam* diploma to a deceased student who, at the time of death: (1) was a resident of the county; or (2) was enrolled in any grade from kindergarten through grade 10 in a public school. An *in memoriam* diploma is ceremonial in nature and recognizes the student's enrollment and membership in the school community.

For both the standard high school diploma and the posthumous honorary diploma, the local school system must determine the number of credits required for eligibility. The number of credits required for a standard high school diploma must be significantly higher than the number required for a posthumous honorary diploma.

Current Law:

High School Diploma Requirements

With the advice of the State Superintendent of Schools, the State Board of Education must establish minimum requirements for issuing certificates and diplomas by public and private high schools. Local school systems may establish graduation requirements beyond the minimum requirements established by the board.

According to regulations, to be awarded a high school diploma, a student entering grade 9 in the 2021-2022 school year or later must be enrolled in a Maryland public school system and have earned a minimum of 22 credits in specified subjects.

Local Fiscal Effect: Local school system expenditures may increase minimally to process requests and verify eligibility for posthumous diplomas. MSDE advises that implementation can be managed with existing resources. Several local school systems, including Anne Arundel County Public Schools and Wicomico County Public Schools, report no fiscal impact, while Frederick County Public Schools advises that any additional diploma printing costs are negligible and absorbable within existing resources.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education; Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Frederick County Public Schools; Wicomico County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

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me/mcr

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