

April 13, 2011

Mr. James H. DeGraffenreidt, Jr., President
Maryland State Board of Education
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

Dear Mr. DeGraffenreidt:

With respect to the Memorandum of Understanding between the Maryland State Board of Education ("the Board") and the Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation ("DLLR") dated June 2009, and in addition to DLLR's annual report on oversight and implementation of the External Diploma Program and the GED programs at the September 2010 State Board meeting, DLLR is happy to provide a progress report to the Board at the upcoming April 26, 2011 meeting.

Since the time of the signing of the MOU through the end of 2010, there was a significant downward shift in the national economy. History has traditionally shown that during an economic downturn, there is an increased demand for GED testing. This was particularly true in Maryland, where during that time frame the demand for GED testing increased more than 25%, from 8,564 applications in 2008 to 10,819 applications in 2010. I am happy to report that regardless of the economic conditions and increased demand, DLLR continues to address the challenges and the clear need for expand to serve the State's GED candidates efficiently and effectively.

At the time of transfer, Maryland had 19 GED Public Testing Sites. As of today, Maryland still has 19 GED Public Testing Sites, with an additional site soon to be re-established at Baltimore City Community College's Harbor Campus, for a total of 20 sites. In response to the increased demand for testing, and to ease the backlog caused by the closure of the BCCC site, the Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation's Eutaw Street location became an official, public GED testing center making available 15 additional GED Testing slots in Baltimore City per month. Since testing began at this location, a total of 368 candidates have been tested. This creative use of space has been so successful that DLLR is looking for more ways to expand the schedule to accommodate additional test times.

Below is an accounting of the GED Testing site issues by location:

Baltimore City: On December 31, 2009, the Baltimore City Community College permanently closed the building where GED Testing has been held since 2002. The GED Testing Office attempts to negotiate new space for testing with the college were originally unsuccessful. This center had accommodated an average 80 candidates per month, resulting in a decrease of almost 500 testers during the year. Since this closing, the GED Testing Office has worked with BCCC's Adult and Continuing Education Department to secure dedicated testing space. The new space at the Baltimore City Community College has been approved by the GED Testing Service at the American Council for Education (ACE), testing materials are being ordered and the site should be again operational in June 2011.

A second GED Testing Center site, located at MSDE's Workforce Technology Center on Argonne Drive in Baltimore City was closed in February and March 2010, due to testing administration irregularities. All the American Council of Education protocols were immediately followed after the breach and the Site was closed temporarily to resolve the issue. Testing at the center resumed in April 2010.

Carroll County: Testing in Carroll County is held at Westminster High School (WHS) provided by the Carroll County Public Schools. HVAC renovation of that facility began at the close of the school year in June 2010 and the entire building was closed. One week prior to testing in June 2010, the GED Testing Office was told by the principal that testing could not be accommodated for the entire summer. As a result, we were unable to establish a new or addendum site prior to closing. Carroll Community College expressed interest in providing space for GED testing; however, in October 2010, we were informed that the college would not be able to meet the requirements for space and scheduling. We are happy to report that after the renovations, the facility re-opened in the September 2010 and GED testing resumed.

Frederick County: Testing in Frederick County provided by the Frederick County Public Schools at its Walkersville Adult Education facility. Late in the school term we were informed that this facility would be closed and the county school system did not wish to continue providing space for GED testing any longer. Frederick Community College, the new recipient of an instructional grant, was approved as a GED testing site and testing resumed August 2010.

Prince George's County: The Prince George's County Public School System has provided Parkdale High School as a testing site. In October 2010, this site was temporarily closed due to a security breach. All the American Council of Education protocols were immediately followed after the breach and the Site was closed temporarily to resolve the issue. Testing at the center resumed in April.

Summary of Testing Slots Lost Due to Site Closings:

Location	Dates of Closure	Length of Closure	Testing slots per month	Number of slots lost
BCCC Harbor Campus	Jan 2010 to May 2011	17 months	60	1020
MSDE's Workforce Technology Center	Feb 2010 to April 2010	2 months	20	40
Carroll County Public Schools' Westminster High School	July 2010 to September 2010	2 months	36	72
Frederick County Public Schools' Walkersville Adult Ed Facility*	Closed permanently beginning July 2010	2 months	36	72
Prince George's Public School's Parkdale High School	October 2010 to April 2011	6 months	40	240
			Total number of slots lost due to closures	1444

** Frederick Community College agreed to open a GED Testing site to replace the Walkersville location in Frederick County which opened in Fall 2010*

As a result of increased demand and continuing emergency or last minute notice of testing site closures, DLLR is conducting exploratory discussions with potential partners in GED Testing to expand our testing capacity. On March 25, 2011, DLLR received approval to identify (not-for-profit) One Stop locations and local public libraries to expand GED testing. In an effort to identify additional Test Centers and/or GED Testing Access sites, DLLR has made site visits to Hagerstown, Baltimore City and County to discuss testing site requirements, conduct preliminary inspections of testing space and provide an orientation to site officials on GED testing requirements.

DLLR will continue to identify new testing locations and collect and monitor GED testing data until the data reflects DLLR has effectively reduced wait times for GED Testing. DLLR's target goal is to increase capacity statewide to a level that will enable applicants to apply for testing by the 15th of the month and be scheduled for assessment in the next calendar month, thereby eliminating wait time.

The increase in GED testing sites will increase the need for GED Test Examiners. In anticipation of this need, DLLR has requested and has received a hiring freeze exemption for GED Test Examiners from the Department of Budget and Management. These positions are posted and an aggressive recruitment and outreach strategy has been employed to obtain qualified candidates. This strategy includes the use of the Maryland Workforce Exchange to post these positions as well as networking with our partners: local adult education grantees, Workforce Investment Boards, and local library leadership around the State. Interviews are being scheduled to fill the GED Test Examiner positions.

The GED Testing Office has historically been challenged with operating at a deficit as there is no federal or state funding appropriated for the operation of the GED Testing program. The only program income is derived from fees paid for such services as test scheduling, transcripts, and returned check fees. The GED Test scheduling fee has been maintained at \$45 since the early 2000s, and other peripheral fees have been maintained at previous levels as well.

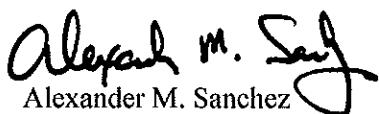
GED Testing Office files transferred to DLLR from MSDE contain some documentation of this deficit in the years prior to the transfer to DLLR. During the transfer, MSDE stated the deficit in the funding for GED Testing had been covered by the Federal Adult Education and Family Literacy Act grant administrative funds. DLLR however, previously had been strictly instructed by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) at the U.S. Department of Education that no portion of the federal grant was to be utilized to support the GED Testing program. DLLR requested and received written clarification from OVAE that the federal grant funds, including the administrative support portion, *may not* be used to operate GED Testing. This leaves DLLR with a funding gap that demands a solution in very challenging economic times. DLLR is exploring multiple options and resources.

DLLR has established an internal GED Improvement Team to plan for the modernization of GED Testing. The group is exploring the feasibility of implementing a decentralization model, establishing Addendum Sites to serve special populations, online fee payments and readiness for computer based testing that will be implemented by the new GED Testing Service/Pearson VUE partnership. The decentralization model is currently used by all but three (3) states and allows multiple locations across the state to register, schedule and proctor the GED Testing process. The State GED Testing office would be responsible for approving test sites, examiner qualifications, monitoring for compliance and serving as the central records office.

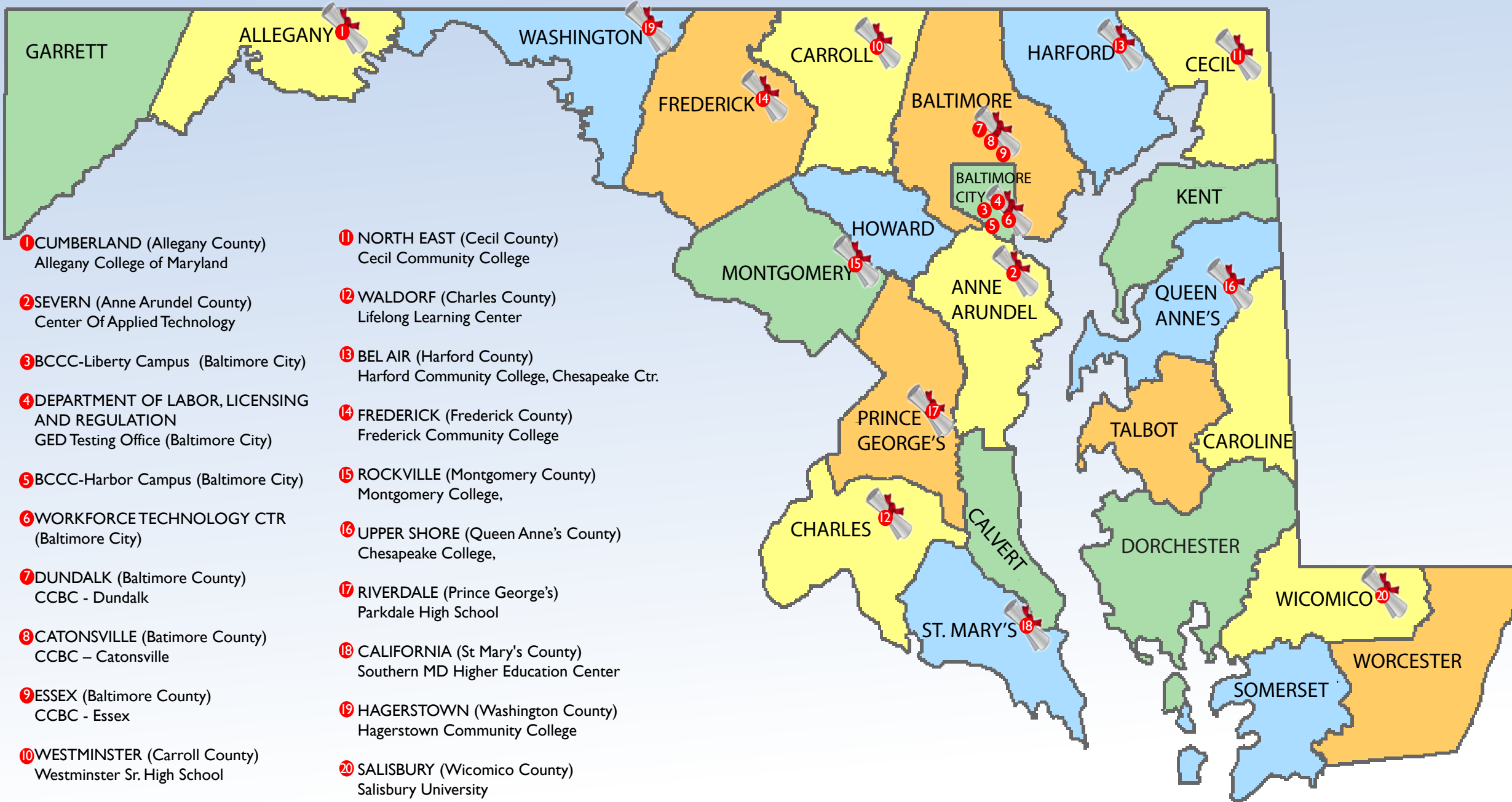
Your inquiry references "delays in the reporting of testing results." DLLR is pleased to report there has been a reduction in time reporting testing results. During MSDE's administration of GED Testing, MSDE advertised that test results were mailed within 4 – 6 weeks of testing. In 2009, immediately following the transfer to DLLR, the wait time for test results rose to a high of 69 days due to a necessary shut down of the electronic reporting system. Since then, the wait time has steadily declined, and for the first seven months of fiscal year 2011, the average wait time for results was 26 days, less than 4 weeks.

In conclusion, I hope the information in this document addresses the concerns raised by the public and members of the General Assembly and provides you with the necessary assurances that DLLR is fully committed to the roles and responsibilities in the joint awarding of high school diplomas by examination through the EDP or the GED Testing Program.

Very truly yours,



Alexander M. Sanchez
Secretary



2011 GED TESTING CENTERS IN MARYLAND



OVERVIEW OF ADULT EDUCATION

Maryland Adult Education and Literacy Services Program Summary

Resources Available Fiscal Year 2010

- Federal Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (WIA Title II): \$8.8M
- Maryland Literacy Works, Adult General Education, External Diploma Program: \$6.8 M


Measure	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010
Total Maryland Enrollment in Adult Education Instruction	39,738	37,568	41,693	42,761
Number of Grantees Providing Instruction	35	35	32	32
Number of Students on the Waiting List for Instruction	5,000	4,445	3,716	Available 5/11
Percentage of Students Increasing Level of Literacy	47%	49%	46%	44%
# Diplomas by Examination Awarded in Maryland (GED + EDP)	6,175	6,069	6,056	5,605

Need for Adult Education and GED Testing

State	Population 18 to 24 Years*	% 18 to 24 Years w/o HS Diploma*	Population 25 Years & Over*	% 25 Years & Over w/o HS Diploma*	% of Adults Lacking Basic Prose Literacy**
Delaware	81,515	18.1%	577,088	13.4%	11%
District of Columbia	69,898	14.7%	404,543	14.5%	19%
Maryland	532,517	14.4%	3,738,604	12.5%	11%
New Jersey	735,507	14.6%	5,842,758	13.2%	17%
Pennsylvania	1,193,167	14.1%	8,510,688	13.2%	13%
Virginia	797,902	13.8%	5,092,358	14.2%	12%
West Virginia	170,890	16.6%	1,253,685	18.4%	13%

*Source: US Census Bureau, American Fact Finder, 2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

**Source: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003 National Assessment of Adult Literacy



OVERVIEW OF ADULT EDUCATION

Federal Adult Education Instructional Program: Fiscal Year July 1, 2009 – June 30, 2010*

State	Federal Funding	Enrollment	Entered Employment	Retained Employment	Obtained HS Diploma/Credential	Entered PS Educ/Training
Delaware	\$1,572,682	5,059	464	1,107	453	151
District of Columbia	\$1,321,546	4,247	533	123	98	88
Maryland	\$8,779,187	33,942	604	1,692	2,692	265
New Jersey	\$15,020,838	33,901	755	140	1,071	412
Pennsylvania	\$18,272,450	34,975	2,918	6,922	3,237	899
Virginia	\$12,477,803	29,802	459	1,568	3,929	224
West Virginia	\$3,656,485	9,780	381	195	1,686	435

*Source: National Reporting System for Adult Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, United States Department of Education.
<http://wdcrobcopl01.ed.gov/CFAPPS/OVAE/NRS/>

GED Testing Program: 2009**

State	# of Centers	Fee	Total Tested	% Passed	Credential Awarded
Delaware	6	\$75	902	94.1%***	State Bd. of Education Endorsement
District of Columbia	1	\$50	1,071	53.5%	GED Credential
Maryland	20	\$45	8,942	60.1%	Maryland High School Diploma
New Jersey	32	\$50	13,556	62.4%	New Jersey High School Diploma
Pennsylvania	119	Varies	25,344	64.8%	Commonwealth Secondary Sch. Diploma
Virginia	82	\$45	24,186	68.0%	GED Certificate
West Virginia	74	\$0	6,111	74.4%***	West Virginia GED Diploma

**Source: 2009 GED Testing Program Statistical Report. American Council on Education, Washington, DC. July 2010.

***Delaware and West Virginia require that candidates pass the Official Practice Test prior to registration for the GED Tests



OVERVIEW OF ADULT EDUCATION

Comparison of Maryland's Federal Instructional Outcomes to National Average*

MEASURE	National Average	Maryland 2009-10 PERFORMANCE
ABE Beginning Literacy	36%	43%
ABE Beginning	43%	50%
ABE Low Intermediate	43%	45%
ABE High Intermediate	37%	31%
ASE Low	40%	51%
ESL Beginning Literacy	44%	58%
ESL Low Beginning	48%	62%
ESL High Beginning	51%	53%
ESL Low Intermediate	47%	45%
ESL High Intermediate	42%	38%
ESL Advanced	25%	21%
HS Diploma/GED	52%	71%

*Source: Office of Vocational and Adult Education, United States Department of Education.