

7-205.1.

(A) ~~THERE IS A~~ IN THIS SECTION, "PROGRAM" MEANS THE MARYLAND ADULT EXTERNAL HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM ESTABLISHED FOR THE CITIZENS OF MARYLAND UNDER REGULATIONS ADOPTED BY THE STATE BOARD.

(B) ACCORDING TO THESE REGULATIONS:

(1) THE STATE BOARD RECOGNIZES DEMONSTRATED COMPETENCIES IN ADULTS, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THESE COMPETENCIES WERE ACQUIRED IN A FORMAL SCHOOL SETTING; AND

(2) IN RESPONSE TO THIS RECOGNITION OF COMPETENCIES, THE DEPARTMENT PROVIDES ALTERNATIVE REQUIREMENTS AND METHODS OF OBTAINING A MARYLAND HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA.

(C) (1) BECAUSE THE PROGRAM IS A VALUABLE SERVICE THAT IS PROVIDED TO THE CITIZENS OF MARYLAND, AT LEAST THROUGH FISCAL YEAR 2003, FUNDING FOR THE PROGRAM IN THE BUDGET OF THE DEPARTMENT SHALL BE AT A MINIMUM EQUAL TO THE FUNDING FOR THE PROGRAM IN THE FISCAL YEAR 1997 BUDGET. FOR EACH OF FISCAL YEARS 1998 THROUGH 2001 THE GOVERNOR SHALL INCLUDE IN THE ANNUAL BUDGET BILL SUBMITTED TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, INCLUDING ANY PROPOSED SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET, A GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATION FOR THE MARYLAND EXTERNAL HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM IN AN AMOUNT NOT LESS THAN THE AMOUNT OF THE GOVERNOR'S GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATION FOR THE PROGRAM IN FISCAL YEAR 1996.

(2) FOR EACH OF FISCAL YEARS 1998 THROUGH 2001 THE GOVERNOR SHALL INCLUDE FEDERAL FUNDS, TO THE EXTENT AVAILABLE, FOR THE PROGRAM IN AN AMOUNT NOT LESS THAN THE AMOUNT OF THE GOVERNOR'S FEDERAL FUND APPROPRIATION FOR THE PROGRAM IN FISCAL YEAR 1996.

(D) DURING FISCAL YEAR ~~2003~~ 2001, IN ORDER TO ASSESS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROGRAM, THE STATE BOARD SHALL CONDUCT AN EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM.

(E) THE STATE BOARD SHALL REPORT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON OR BEFORE DECEMBER 31, ~~2003~~ 2000, IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 2-1312 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARTICLE, ON THE RESULTS OF THE EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That for Fiscal Year 1998 only, the Governor may provide the required General Fund appropriation by transfer of excess funds in the contingent fund or other appropriations by approved budget amendment or by deficiency appropriation.

~~SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July 1, 1997.~~

SECTION 3. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect June 1, 1997. It shall remain effective until June 30, 2001, and, at the end of June 30, 2001, with no further action required by the General Assembly, this Act shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.