

**HOUSE BILL 3884**  
SENTENCE CREDIT FOR PASSING HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY TESTING  
730 ILCS 5 SECTION 3-6-3

**TOTAL BENEFITS IN REDUCED FISCAL COSTS IN FISCAL YEAR 2014: \$445,134**

House Bill 3884 ([HB 3884](#)) amends the Unified Code of Corrections to award 90 days of sentence credits to any prisoner who passes a high school equivalency test (such as the General Equivalency Degree, or GED, test) while committed to the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) or while in pre-trial detention prior to the current commitment. This bill increases the amount of sentence credits from the current law of 60 days.

The increased sentence credits for passing the GED test may incentivize participation from inmates and aid IDOC in managing the prison population. Research also indicates that GED programs have a positive impact on recidivism, meaning those who participate in the program will likely have a lower recidivism rate than those who do not.<sup>1</sup>

To analyze the possible impact of this bill, SPAC analyzed GED completion data from fiscal year 2014. The estimate below uses assumed IDOC credit awards. These awards may vary due to truth-in-sentencing or policy rules that limit sentence credits. SPAC presents these estimates as a starting point for discussion.

FY 2014 Impact of Additional Sentence Credit		
	Current	Proposed
Number of Offenders (FY14)	929	
Credits Awarded in Days	60	90
Credits Awarded in Years	0.16	0.25
Total Bed Years of Credits (Offenders x Credit Years)	152.6	228.9
Difference in Bed Years (Proposed – Current)	76.3	
Marginal Cost of Year in IDOC	\$5,834	
<b>Value of Additional Time Awarded</b>	<b>\$445,134</b>	

Two recent changes may impact this estimation. First, the GED is now an online test. Previously, offenders practiced and took the exam via paper-and-pencil. This change may lower pass rates for the exam and reduce the number of offenders receiving the sentence credits, as some offenders may not be familiar with computers.<sup>2</sup> This transition took place in the last year, contributing to lower total of offenders passing the GED compared to fiscal year 2013, when 1,467 offenders passed the GED exam. Second, the GED test recently became more challenging and changed its content to be more in line with the Common Core State Standards, which may further lower the pass rate. The current passing rate is 80 percent.<sup>3</sup> Given these changes and their unknown impact on future passing rates, SPAC uses the current values as a conservative estimate of impact of HB 3884.

<sup>1</sup> Jensen, E.L., & Reed, G.E. (2006). Adult Correctional Education Programs: An Update on Current Status Based on Recent Studies. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 44(1), 81-98.

<sup>2</sup> van Buren, M., Christopherson, M., & Schwartz, T. (2014). Report for the Illinois Department of Corrections: i-Pathways and Its Effectiveness in Illinois Prisons. *University of Wisconsin-Madison: Robert M. La Follette School of Public Affairs*.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*