

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2026 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Enrolled - Revised

Senate Bill 204

(Senator Kagan, *et al.*)

Education, Energy, and the Environment

Ways and Means

Public Schools - Maryland Civic Excellence Program - Established

This bill establishes the Maryland Civic Excellence Program in which local school systems may choose to participate to recognize the civic readiness and civic engagement of public high school students. By the 2027-2028 school year, the State Board of Education (SBE), in consultation with experts and stakeholders, must adopt regulations to establish the criteria and requirements for awarding a seal of civic excellence to a qualified student who attends a public high school in a participating local school system. SBE's criteria must include a capstone project requirement, as specified. A local school system may choose to participate; however, a public high school in a participating local school system may not opt out. A participating public school that determines that a student has fulfilled the criteria established in regulations must (1) award the student a Seal of Civic Excellence and (2) recognize the award by awarding a cord or medal or by attaching other insignia on the student's high school diploma. Participating local school systems may collaborate with specified organizations or institutions to support program implementation. By July 1, 2028, and each July 1, thereafter, each participating local school system must submit to MSDE a report based on the most recently completed school year. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2026.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: SBE can adopt regulations to establish the criteria and requirements for awarding students a seal of civic excellence with existing resources. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: To the extent that a local school system chooses to participate, local expenditures may increase for staff and other related costs, and operations may be affected. However, any expenditures or operational effects are discretionary. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The criteria established by SBE must include a requirement that, in order to receive a seal of civic excellence, a student must complete a capstone project through an extracurricular activity that is focused on civic service in State, county, or local government.

If a local school system chooses to participate in the program, a public high school must implement the program, in accordance with the regulations adopted by SBE, by incorporating a civic service capstone project into an extracurricular activity at the school that: (1) is an existing extracurricular activity at the time the local school system chooses to participate in the program; or (2) is a new extracurricular activity that is supervised by a paid staff member.

Current Law: Maryland high schools offer special awards to students. Some of these are statewide recognitions including the Seal of Biliteracy. Local school systems and specific schools also confer departmental awards in various disciplines. According to regulations, to graduate, a student must complete 75 service-learning hours or complete a locally designed program in student service that has been approved by the State Superintendent of Schools. Some local school systems award a certificate or other recognition for exceeding this requirement.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See SB 8 and HB 72 of 2025; SB 762 of 2024 and SB 271 of 2023.

Designated Cross File: HB 57 (Delegate Vogel) - Ways and Means.

Information Source(s): Maryland State Department of Education; Baltimore City Public Schools; Anne Arundel County Public Schools; Frederick County Public Schools; Montgomery County Public Schools; Prince George's County Public Schools; Wicomico County Public Schools; St. Mary's County Public Schools; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History:
jg/mcr

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