

Mary Margaret Dineen
310 S. East Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21224

Senate Education, Energy & the Environment Committee

SB 204 Education – Maryland Civic Excellence Program – Established

Bill Hearing Date February 4, 2026

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Honorable Committee Members,

My name is Mary Margaret Dineen, and I am a community member from Baltimore City. I strongly support the Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence because our state should recognize students who demonstrate responsibility, initiative, and devotion to their communities through meaningful civic engagement.

In my experience, as someone who has a 25-year career working on democracy and governance programs overseas, I know of the dangers to democracy when a society does not support younger generations to develop and practice the norms and skills of democratic interaction. Civic learning is most impactful when young people apply their knowledge beyond the classroom. Through this work, students develop essential civic skills such as collaboration, problem-solving, ethical decision-making, and respect for diverse perspectives.

Currently, too few students see civic engagement recognized as a core part of educational success. A graduation seal would signal that Maryland values service, participation, and leadership alongside academic achievement and career preparation.

This is an especially meaningful moment to establish the Seal as we approach the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Honoring students who actively live out the principles of responsibility, self-government, and commitment to the common good helps ensure that the next generation is prepared to sustain our democratic republic.

Please report favorably on HB 57.

Sincerely,
Mary Margaret Dineen