

Emmaline Andersen, 120 Churchwardens Rd. Baltimore, MD, 21212

House Ways & Means Committee

HB 57 Education – Maryland Civic Excellence Program – Established

Bill Hearing Date January 29, 2026

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and Honorable Committee Members,

My name is Emmaline Andersen, and I am a 9th grade student at Baltimore Polytechnic Institute. I support the Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence because students who do meaningful civics projects deserve to be recognized for the time, effort, and leadership they put into improving their communities.

In my own experience, civic learning is most powerful when students are trusted with real responsibility. I started a club at my high school that works to learn about government processes and advocate for particular bills or causes the club supports. Through this experience, I learned about the importance of standing up for what you believe in and helping peers to stand up too.

Many students care deeply about their communities but do not see clear pathways that connect civic engagement to school success or graduation. A Seal of Civic Excellence would help change that by showing students that service, participation, and leadership are valued and worth pursuing. A graduation seal matters because it shows that civic engagement is just as important as academic achievement, athletics, or career readiness.

This is the right time to create the Seal of Civic Excellence as we approach the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Honoring students who live out those ideals today helps ensure that the next generation is ready to carry our democratic republic forward.

Thank you for considering my testimony.