

Paige Williams

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 Paige Williams, and I am a 10th grader at Severna Park High School in Anne Arundel County. **I support** the Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence because students who undertake meaningful civics projects deserve to be recognised 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. For example, Anne Arundel County leads a program called Harvest for the Hungry every year, with each school working together and pitching in. At my school, it's run through our Key Club, where our officer team and students are at the core of the project. Over a single month, we collected money every week, created videos, staged a competition, and counted every dollar ourselves. Together, we raised over \$20,000 for Anne Arundel County Food Bank, crushing our goal. We were at the forefront of the project and delivered results in the same way many students do, with little recognition. Through this experience, I learned that we are not to be underestimated. When students work together, they can tremendously create change, impacting numerous lives with what may seem like a small effort.

Many students care deeply about their communities, but do not see clear pathways that connect civic engagement to success in school. A Seal of Civic Excellence would help change that by showing students that service, participation, and leadership are valued. A graduation seal matters because it shows that civic engagement is just as important as academic achievement, athletics, or career readiness. Civic engagement is often overlooked when discussing graduation, but imagine how much change could be made if more students could clearly see the connection and pursue pathways to civic engagement through establishing the Seal of Civic Excellence.

For these reasons, I request a **favorable report** on HB0057 to help foster civic engagement and empower more students across Maryland to improve their communities.

Thank you for considering my testimony,

Paige Williams