



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 **Nathan Peterson**, and I am an educator and civic volunteer from Berwyn Heights, Prince George's County. 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, civic learning is most impactful when young people apply their knowledge beyond the classroom. This is needed now more than ever given the intense rhetoric that is being displayed at the federal level regarding our rights and freedoms. If we are to preserve our democracy we must teach our youth the values of free speech and how to disagree in a civil manner. We must teach the importance of the division of powers and encourage our youth to advance these principles as they get older. This seal would help to encourage students to do just that and be one step in helping to preserve our democracy.

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.

Thank you.