



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 Joshua Oh, and I am a senior at Crofton High School. 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. For the past decade I've run a non-profit called Kid Changemakers. It started from the no's we received because of our age when trying to volunteer so we created our own opportunities for ourselves and fellow children. After Covid I lobbied with Senator Elfreth and testified to get SB-316 passed removing the tax on baby diapers in Maryland saving 12 millions dollars a year. Throughout the time working with students and growing with service integral in my life I've seen how important recognition and positive reinforcement is. This bill may seem minor to you but kids are constantly being downplayed for their efforts in the classroom and volunteering. In the years I've been a part of the MDCEC YAC, we've continually worked for this bill because of how important it is to us. It is something that on the surface may seem small or unnecessary but to me is another step to unlocking civics to all. Passing the bill made me learn that civics can be for kids. I used to believe it was only for adults but this bill can break that viewpoint. It will get more kids involved in something bigger than ourselves that isn't recognized often.

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.