

HB 057 FAV

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Ways and Means Committee:

I am writing to express my support of HB057, the Maryland Civic Excellence Program. I truly believe that one of the biggest threats to our system of governance, not only in our country, but in our state, is ignorance. And a solution to the problem of many passionate debates is better civics education. If we make the proper educational investments in our youth, the next generation will be stronger and better equipped to handle the political issues of their day.

I remember my time in school. I paid just enough attention in my government class to pass. It wasn't until I was an adult, years out of school, that I realized that civic literacy is one of the most vital competencies that an American can hold. This bill has the potential to enable more young people to understand and engage in the process of being well-represented, all the way from Washington D.C., to Annapolis, down to their homeowners associations!

Convention of States Action Maryland is a non-profit educational organization that has been active across the state and within the General Assembly for years. One of our focus areas has been teaching civics to adults and children outside of school systems. Its the organization where I caught up on much of my late-learned civics knowledge. This bill will provide a more official and incentivized structure for us to collaborate with young people on building this critical skill set within local school systems.

I do think that civics is best learned outside of the classroom, and there are plenty of organizations that can make learning civics more exciting and engaging. My understanding is that currently, schools and teachers are overburdened already, and this bill will help outside organizations, whether its the one I work with, or others, to partner with the schools and provide supplemental education. The result: a new generation of young people, equipped by knowledge, fueled by interests that they hold personally, engaging in the democratic process at higher rates than before.

Thank you for your attention in this matter and for your public service in the General Assembly. I encourage you to provide a favorable report on this bill.

--Seth Lipko, Legislative Liaison for Convention of States Action Maryland