

Chapter 677

(Senate Bill 204)

AN ACT concerning

Public Schools – Maryland Civic Excellence Program – Established

FOR the purpose of establishing the Maryland Civic Excellence Program ~~in the State Department of Education~~ for certain public high school students; requiring the State Board of Education to establish the criteria and requirements for the Program in regulation; *requiring that a certain capstone project be included in the Program*; authorizing a local school system to participate in the Program to recognize ~~students who meet criteria related to student proficiency in civics and civic literacy~~ public high school students for their civic readiness and civic engagement; and generally relating to the Maryland Civic Excellence Program.

BY adding to

Article – Education

Section 7–137

Annotated Code of Maryland

(2025 Replacement Volume and 2025 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Education

7–137.

(A) IN THIS SECTION, “PROGRAM” MEANS THE MARYLAND CIVIC EXCELLENCE PROGRAM.

(B) ~~(1)~~ THERE IS A MARYLAND CIVIC EXCELLENCE PROGRAM ~~IN THE DEPARTMENT~~ THAT RECOGNIZES THE CIVIC READINESS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OF PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE STATE.

~~(2) THE PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM IS TO RECOGNIZE STUDENTS AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS THAT PROMOTE THE CIVIC READINESS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT OF STUDENTS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE STATE.~~

(C) ~~THE DEPARTMENT SHALL ADMINISTER THE PROGRAM.~~

~~(D)~~ (C) (1) NOT LATER THAN THE 2027–2028 SCHOOL YEAR, THE ~~DEPARTMENT~~ STATE BOARD, IN CONSULTATION WITH EXPERTS AND STAKEHOLDERS, SHALL ~~DEVELOP GUIDELINES TO ASSIST PARTICIPATING LOCAL~~

~~SCHOOL SYSTEMS TO DETERMINE STUDENT PROFICIENCY IN CIVICS AND CIVIC LITERACY~~ ADOPT REGULATIONS TO ESTABLISH THE CRITERIA AND REQUIREMENTS FOR AWARDING A SEAL OF CIVIC EXCELLENCE TO A QUALIFIED STUDENT WHO ATTENDS A PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL IN A PARTICIPATING LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM.

(2) THE CRITERIA ESTABLISHED BY THE STATE BOARD SHALL INCLUDE A REQUIREMENT THAT, IN ORDER TO RECEIVE A SEAL OF CIVIC EXCELLENCE, A STUDENT MUST COMPLETE A CAPSTONE PROJECT THROUGH AN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY THAT IS FOCUSED ON CIVIC SERVICE IN STATE, COUNTY, OR LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

~~(E) (D)~~ (1) ~~THIS SUBSECTION APPLIES ONLY TO A~~ A LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM THAT PARTICIPATES MAY CHOOSE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM.

(2) A PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL IN A PARTICIPATING LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM SHALL UTILIZE THE GUIDELINES ESTABLISHED UNDER SUBSECTION (D) OF THIS SECTION TO ESTABLISH:

~~(I) A MARYLAND CIVIC EXCELLENCE PROGRAM IN SCHOOLS;~~

~~(II) APPLICATION CRITERIA TO ADMINISTER THE PROGRAM;~~

~~AND~~

~~(III) CRITERIA FOR AWARDING A STUDENT THE SEAL OF CIVIC EXCELLENCE~~ MAY NOT OPT OUT OF PARTICIPATING IN THE PROGRAM.

(3) IF A LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM CHOOSES TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM, A PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL SHALL IMPLEMENT THE PROGRAM, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE REGULATIONS ADOPTED BY THE STATE BOARD, BY INCORPORATING A CIVIC SERVICE CAPSTONE PROJECT INTO AN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY AT THE SCHOOL THAT:

(I) IS AN EXISTING EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY AT THE TIME THE LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM CHOOSES TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM; OR

(II) IS A NEW EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY THAT IS SUPERVISED BY A PAID STAFF MEMBER.

~~(F) (E)~~ A PARTICIPATING LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM THAT DETERMINES A PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT HAS FULFILLED THE CRITERIA UNDER THE PROGRAM MAY ESTABLISHED IN REGULATIONS ADOPTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH SUBSECTION (C) OF THIS SECTION SHALL:

(1) AWARD THE STUDENT A SEAL OF CIVIC EXCELLENCE; AND

(2) RECOGNIZE THE AWARD BY AWARDING A CORD OR MEDAL OR BY ATTACHING OTHER INSIGNIA ON THE STUDENT'S HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA.

~~(G)~~ **(F) A PARTICIPATING LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM MAY COLLABORATE WITH NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS, CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS, OR INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION TO SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAM.**

~~(H)~~ **(G) ON OR BEFORE JULY 1, 2028, AND EACH JULY 1 THEREAFTER, EACH PARTICIPATING LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEM SHALL SUBMIT TO THE DEPARTMENT A REPORT ON THE PROGRAM BASED ON THE MOST RECENTLY COMPLETED SCHOOL YEAR.**

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July 1, 2026.

Approved by the Governor, May 26, 2026.