SENATE BILL 204

F1 6lr0716
(PRE–FILED) CF HB 57

By: **Senators Kagan ~~and Ready~~, Ready, Attar, Brooks, Carozza, Feldman, Ferguson, Gallion, Gile, Harris, Hester, Hettleman, King, Lewis Young, Love, McKay, Simonaire, Smith, Waldstreicher, A. Washington, M. Washington, Watson, and West**

Requested: August 20, 2025
Introduced and read first time: January 14, 2026
Assigned to: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Committee Report: Favorable with amendments
Senate action: Adopted
Read second time: February 12, 2026

CHAPTER _____

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; 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

EXPLANATION: **CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.**
[Brackets**]** indicate matter deleted from existing law.
Underlining indicates amendments to bill.
~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.

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) 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.

~~(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.

~~(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:

_____

Governor.

_____

President of the Senate.

_____

Speaker of the House of Delegates.