

**Testimony in Opposition to House Bill 284
Education—Maryland High School Diploma—Civics Test Requirement**

**House Ways and Means Committee
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2:00 PM**

**Tina N. Dove, M.Ed.
Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association opposes House Bill 284, requiring students to take and pass the civics test administered to applicants for U.S. naturalization. At a time when educators and policymakers are concerned about excessive testing in our schools, we are opposed to adding yet another test, especially one that is duplicative of what is currently required.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our 896,837 students for careers and jobs of the future. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3 million-member National Education Association (NEA).

Current high school graduation requirements for Maryland require one credit in Local, State and National Government that is aligned with the Maryland High School Assessment for Government (or HSA).¹ The framework for high school government class covers: the Structures and Origins of Government; the American Government System (including the three branches of government); Economic Policy; and Domestic and Foreign Policy.² The learning objectives associated with these topic areas go far beyond the range of topics being tested by the civics test administered by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Because the HSA is meant to test the topic areas being taught in Maryland's government classes, one can safely conclude that the HSA is currently meeting the need this bill seeks to serve. As such, this additional assessment, can only be seen as duplicative and unnecessary.

MSEA members are dedicated to ensuring that every student in Maryland receives a great public education, one that prepares them for college, career and citizenship. We believe that a vital democracy requires an informed and engaged citizenry. Our state's social studies educators work hard every day from kindergarten through high school to ensure that our students are ready to exercise their responsibilities as citizens. We believe that the current high school requirement is adequate for measuring our student's understanding of their governments' history, functions and systems.

We ask the committee to issue an Unfavorable Report on House Bill 284.

¹ <http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/Testing/GraduationsRequirements2018.pdf>
(Accessed on January 31, 2020)

²

<http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DCAA/SocialStudies/AmericanGovernmentFramework.pdf>
(Accessed on January 31, 2020)