

**SB271\_USM\_FAV.pdf**

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Position: FAV



**SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY and the ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**  
**Senate Bill 271**  
**Education – Maryland Civic Engagement Program – Established**  
**March 1, 2023**  
**Favorable**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on Senate Bill 271. The bill establishes the Maryland Civic Engagement Program as a voluntary program that promotes the civic readiness and engagement of students in Maryland’s public schools.

Civic education and civic engagement are foundational components to the world-class education that Maryland students deserve. This bill seeks to reward students who demonstrate knowledge of civics that is essential to participating in and protecting our democracy. Students would also be encouraged to register to vote and to engage in various civically responsible activities, such as peaceful demonstrations, Mock Trial, Model UN, and others. Under this bill, in addition to rewarding students, schools would be recognized for supporting students in achieving these goals.

Unfortunately, civic learning is currently on the ebb in our nation. Too few adults can name the three branches of government or describe the system of checks and balances. Far too few Americans trust our basic governmental institutions or even their fellow citizens. Fundamental civics education and positive experiences during a student’s formative years are crucial for developing civically engaged adults. As former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor and former Congressman Lee Hamilton wrote, “Since American federalism means that local, state, and federal governments share custody of education policy, restoring the civic mission of schools must be the responsibility of policymakers at every level.”

In 2021 USM joined dozens of other higher education institutions and organizations to announce a “Shared Commitment” to make “Democracy Learning a Top Priority for Postsecondary Education,” with two primary goals guiding our civic engagement work: 1) fostering an ethos of civic participation across all parts of all System institutions; and 2) identifying civic literacy as a core expectation for all students.

For these reasons the USM supports Senate Bill 271, to empower school districts to adopt civics seals for high school graduates who excel in civic knowledge and participation.



### **About the University System of Maryland**

The University System of Maryland (USM)—one system made up of twelve institutions, three regional centers, and a central office—awards eight out of every ten bachelor’s degrees in the State of Maryland. The USM is governed by a Board of Regents, comprised of twenty-one members from diverse professional and personal backgrounds. The chancellor, Dr. Jay Perman, oversees and manages the operations of USM. However, each constituent institution is run by its own president who has authority over that university. Each of USM’s 12 institutions has a distinct and unique approach to the mission of educating students and promoting the economic, intellectual, and cultural growth of its surrounding community. These institutions are located throughout the state, from western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, with the flagship campus in the Washington suburbs. The USM includes Historically Black Colleges and Universities, comprehensive institutions, research universities, and the country’s largest public online institution.

USM Office of Government Relations - Patrick Hogan: [phogan@usmd.edu](mailto:phogan@usmd.edu)

**Kalil, Anisa SB0271 Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Anisa Kalil

Position: FAV

Towson, MD February 28th, 2023

Chair Brian Feldman  
Vice Chair Cheryl Kagan  
The Senate of Maryland  
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Position: Support for SB 0271

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and fellow committee members:

My name is Anisa Kalil and I am a current 9th grader in the Baltimore County Public School district. I am also a Maryland Civic Education Coalition member.

Civic engagement has been a part of my life ever since elementary school.

Though the topics we discussed back then were not as influential as the advocacy that I participate in now, my elementary school years led to my running for several more positions that greatly opened my eyes up to what it means to be active in my community. For example, in my 8th grade year, I was elected the Chair of the Baltimore County Junior Councils, representing 30 middle schools of the BCPS school district.

Over the years, I have come to discover more about how larger scale leadership leads to larger scale impact. It is for these reasons and principles that I believe this piece of legislation, Senate Bill 0271 would be in the best interest of our state; more specifically, each school district. The Seal of Civic Engagement would create more of a drive for students to well-exceed the standard amount of service hours set by the state and go beyond how service learning is typically viewed by some, as a 'requirement.' In addition, the motivational standards set by this bill also include the rigorous coursework available to students, such as Advanced Placement (AP) history and government courses and school based extracurricular activities that further engage students in what it is like to be involved in their communities civically.

The passage of this bill would also lead to more awareness spread from students to their peers, siblings, and even parents on how they can get involved in their communities. I believe that it is important to promote this bill so that students across the state of Maryland can continue to grow more active through civic activities such as voting, volunteering, and campaigning for candidates in elections.

I believe that the passage of this bill would lead to great outcomes throughout our state and lead to more recognition of the various civic experiences for which students participate in. I urge you to consider favoring SB 0271. Thank you very much for your time.

Best regards,  
Anisa Kalil

**MOST\_SB271\_FAVORABLE.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ellie Mitchell

Position: FAV



**Testimony on Senate Bill 271**  
**Education – Maryland Civic Engagement Program – Established**  
**Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**  
**March 1, 2023**  
**Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Out of School Time Network (MOST) is a statewide organization dedicated to closing opportunity gaps by expanding both the quantity and quality of afterschool and summer learning opportunities for school-aged young people. MOST is one of the fifty statewide networks supported by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and serves as Maryland’s affiliate to the National Afterschool Association.

Students’ civic engagement is a hallmark of positive youth development and should be an intentional part of every young person’s education. According to [civxnow.org](http://civxnow.org), civic education, when done well, produces young people who are more likely to vote; work on community issues; become socially responsible; and feel confident speaking publicly and interacting with elected officials.

We applaud Senate Bill 271 for providing a concrete way to recognize student civic engagement achievements and for encouraging schools to proactively create more opportunities for young people to build civic readiness. We are particularly pleased that young people’s experiences outside the school day are included in the “Seal of Civic Engagement.” Young people should get more credit for their extracurricular experiences completed afterschool and during the summer. The seal, included on a student’s transcript and diploma, will certainly be an additional attraction for colleges and universities.

Senate Bill 271 provides a straightforward, easy-to-implement structure for recognizing students and schools that will encourage and support more civic engagement programming. MOST urges the committee to provide a favorable report.

Ellie Mitchell  
Director, Maryland Out of School Time Network  
[emitchell@mostnetwork.org](mailto:emitchell@mostnetwork.org)

# **SB 271- Education- Maryland Civic Education Progra**

Uploaded by: Isabel Malizia

Position: FAV

**February 26, 2023**

**Testimony on SB 271**  
**Education – Maryland Civic Engagement Program – Established**  
**Education, Energy, and the Environment**

**Position: Favorable**

Common Cause Maryland supports SB 271: establishing the Maryland Civic Engagement Program in public schools, which would prioritize our youth by ensuring they have opportunities to learn and practice civic engagement, whether it be through volunteerism in organizations such as Girl Scouts or taking a civics class.

The proposed Seal of Civic Engagement award is given to students and public schools in recognition of their efforts to promote student civic engagement. It is an amazing tool for encouraging students to study and engage in civics further. At Common Cause Maryland we believe that youth civic engagement is critical in preserving the future of our democracy.

This program also prioritizes transparency, as the schools must provide an annual report to the Department of Education measuring the effectiveness and participation of the program in general. This report is key in assessing the success of the program and identifying components that need to be improved.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report.

# **SB271CivicEngagement.pdf**

Uploaded by: Justin Ready

Position: FAV



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 1, 2023

**SB 271 Education – Maryland Civic Engagement Program - Established**

Chairman Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee.

SB 271 is a proposal to initiate the Maryland Seal of Civic Engagement program to recognize students and schools for being civically engaged. This voluntary program would allow local school systems that promote civic readiness and civic engagement of students by granting a seal on graduating high school students' diplomas. Local school systems would NOT be required to participate.

**Where did this idea originate?** This program was recommended in 2017 by the Civic Architecture Symposium conducted by MSDE as a call to recognize the work being done by students regarding civics. Connecticut, Arizona, California, Georgia, Ohio, New York, Virginia, and Tennessee have developed and implemented similar programs; however, Maryland did not act on the recommendation.

At a minimum, a participating school system's criterion for a Maryland Seal of Civic Engagement must require a student to receive at least four (4) points in the program. This is done by receiving a minimum of four (4) points under the following layout of the program:

- One (1) point for earning a score of four or five on one or more of the following civics-based assessments
  - The State Assessment on American Government
  - The Advanced Placement US Government and Politics Examination
  - The Advanced Placement US History Examination
  - Comparative Government and Politics Examinations
- One (1) point for earning a grade of A or B in each of the following high school social studies courses
  - United States History
  - Modern World History
  - American Government
- One (1) point for completing at least 120 hours of student service of which at least 50 hours must be completed during high school, and at least 20 hours must be dedicated to a civics-focused project

- One (1) point for participating as a volunteer in an election campaign, voter registration activity, or a peaceful demonstrated
- Up to three (3) points for participating in a school-based, civics-focused extracurricular activity
- Up to two (2) points for participating in a non-school-related extracurricular activity
- One (1) point for registering to vote when eligible

Students who receive four (4) points, or an amount set by their local school system that is greater than four, could be awarded a seal of civic engagement upon graduation or GED completion.

Additionally, school systems with at least 75% of students in its graduation class who have earned the seal of civic engagement could be designated as a center of civic engagement, and receive a banner, Governor's citation, or citation from MSDE.

To recap, SB 271 implements the Civic Architecture Symposium's recommendations from the 2017 task force and allows students to be rewarded and recognized for their civic engagement and knowledge.

I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 271

**MDCEC Testimony SB 271 Civic Seals.pdf**

Uploaded by: Genie Massey

Position: FWA



Testimony to Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

**SENATE BILL 271 Education – Maryland Civic Engagement Program –  
Established**

March 1, 2023

Position: Support, with amendments

The Maryland Civic Education Coalition supports Senate Bill 271. Diploma seals benefit students and the community in numerous ways. Diploma seals can highlight important areas of study and encourage students to participate in learning and self-reflection that challenges them to go beyond what is required. Earning the diploma seal is an incentive for students and a signal to colleges and employers that a student has excelled in the area of civics.

A healthy democracy requires an informed and engaged electorate, and research<sup>1</sup> tells us that it is critical that students who participate in learning activities that include civic knowledge and skills to prepare them are more likely to engage in lifelong civic engagement. These core elements of effective civic education include learning about the historical foundation of our democracy, the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and skills such as collaboration, cooperation, and consensus-building, and appreciation for a diversity of viewpoints. Students who engage in classroom-based activities and extracurricular activities including service-learning projects are more likely to become active citizens.

Therefore, we support SENATE BILL 271 which would empower school systems to honor student excellence in civic knowledge and participation by providing civic seals upon graduation from Maryland schools. SB 271 advances civic excellence by encouraging, but not requiring, local school systems to designate centers of civic engagement. Each center of civic engagement, in turn, would incentivize civic excellence through urging the adoption of commonsense, evidence-based practices like

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<sup>1</sup> [Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools;](https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ca/hs/hssstatesseal.asp)  
<https://www.cde.ca.gov/pd/ca/hs/hssstatesseal.asp>

student access to social studies courses, voter registration, participation in student service, and more.

Minor changes to SB 271, such as simplifying the point system to allow local school systems to enact a plan that is manageable and equitable would strengthen the bill. Allowing local school systems to design the school recognition program would allow for flexibility across the state. We also suggest changing the name to a Seal of Civic Excellence or Achievement to highlight the prestige of the honor.

**We urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 271.**



The Maryland Civic Education Coalition is a cross-partisan organization committed to ensuring that all Maryland students have access to meaningful, comprehensive civic education and service-learning opportunities. We are an inclusive coalition of over 140 civic educators, young people, scholars, community members, and civic organizations from all 23 counties in Maryland and Baltimore City.

**[www.mdcivics.org](http://www.mdcivics.org)**

# **SB0271 Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jessica Mahoney

Position: FWA

Chair Brian Feldman  
Vice Chair Cheryl Kagan  
The Senate of Maryland  
Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

Position: SUPPORT for SB 0271

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and fellow committee members

I'm writing to express enthusiastic support for SB 0271, a bill which continues Maryland's national leadership in strengthening K-12 civic education for all of its students.

As a teacher, I support the Maryland legislature using its statutory authority to encourage the development of civic knowledge, dispositions, and skills that will prepare students for informed participation in our democracy. SB 0271 meets this criteria and would help my students develop confidence in their civic voice and sense of belonging in their community. Through using a diploma seal, it creates multiple pathways for recognizing a student's understanding of and contribution to the public life of their community, our state, and the nation.

Civic seals are an effective, widely adopted policy strategy for bolstering comprehensive civic education, and are currently being used by more than 10 states across the country. Within the context of Maryland, SB 0271 would build on the precedent established by Maryland seal of biliteracy, using an incentive-based strategy to encourage the adoption of educational best practice.

SB 0271 advances civic excellence by encouraging, but not requiring, local school systems to designate centers of civic engagement. Each center of civic engagement, in turn, would catalyze civic excellence through urging the adoption of commonsense, evidence-based practices like student access to social studies courses, voter registration, participation in student service, and more.

Finally, SB 0271 advances the priorities of Governor Moore, whose first executive order authorized the creation of an office for service and civic innovation. By encouraging students to learn the basics of how government works, this bill provides an opportunity for bipartisan partnership in the legislature and an occasion for the branches of government to work together on behalf of the public interest of our state's rising, young leaders. Nothing could be more important, nor more urgent.

For the foregoing reasons, I support SB 0271

Sincerely,  
Ms. Mahoney

# **3\_1 SB 271 Education – Maryland Civic Engagement P**

Uploaded by: Lois Hybl

Position: FWA



**TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, & THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

**SB 271 - Education – Maryland Civic Engagement Program – Established**

**POSITION: Support, with amendments**

**BY: Nancy Soreng, President**

**Date: March 1, 2023**

The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) believes in representative government and in the individual liberties established in the Constitutions of the United States and of Maryland. Sustaining our democratic form of government depends upon civic education as a key component of the democratic process.

**SB 271 - Education – Maryland Civic Engagement Program – Established** would empower local education agencies to establish a seal of civic engagement and a recognition program for schools which have a high participation rate among graduating seniors. We support SB 271 to incentivize students to invest more time and effort in civic education and service learning and elevate the overall value of civics in Maryland's public schools.

Civic education occurs in many settings beyond the school day, such as in sports, volunteer organizations, houses of worship, political rallies and campaigns, and at the polling place on Election Day. We support opportunities for students to put learning into practice such as in service-learning experiences, extra-curricular activities, school and community engagement, and opportunities to participate in school governance. We support strengthening service and volunteer opportunities as a pathway to stronger communities, improved mental health, improved academic outcomes, and a healthier democracy as individuals work in groups to solve issues they care about.

Ensuring the future of our democratic republic is dependent on fostering civic knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions. Maryland students who excel academically in social studies and exceed expectations in volunteer and service-learning should be recognized for their achievements. This recognition will serve as a concrete signal to colleges and employer that they will engage productively as members of the community.

We see room for improvement in the bill to ensure equity in all communities and for all students. We support SB 271 with amendments to ensure it is feasible for local education agencies to enact the program.

We urge a favorable report on SB 271.