



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 1, 2023

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

Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and members of the House Ways and Means Committee;

As amended, SB 271 is a proposal to initiate the Maryland Civic Excellence 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 in the program, which would begin with the 2024-2025 school year.

**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 Excellence 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 a voter registration activity, or a peaceful demonstration

- 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 excellence 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 excellence could be designated as a center of civic excellence, 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 excellence and knowledge.

I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 271