

**March 27, 2023**

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

**Position: Favorable with Amendments**

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.

The amendments we propose would be to make sure this bill is inclusive as possible. Currently, the bill requires local schools to provide access to programs to four of seven categories which are: civic based assessments, social studies courses, volunteer activities, student service, school based extra-curricular activities, non-school based extra-curricular activities, and voter registration.

We are concerned with only offering four of the seven in these schools. We want to ensure that all students have a fair process. This includes students of all backgrounds, that may include noncitizens. If schools gave students information and access to all seven categories, the students could choose the four categories that are more accessible to them to get their points. If this is not feasible, we would also be interested in finding alternatives for the voter registration category to include non-citizens in some way whether it be a pledge to vote or voting registrar training.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report with amendments.



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**Maryland**  
*Holding Power Accountable*

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