



Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Testimony in Support of SB 762

02/15/2024

To the Honorable Members of the Maryland Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

My name is Zack Buster Johnson, and I live in Anne Arundel County. I am here to express my strong support for Senate Bill 762, which aims to establish the Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence program.

As Student Government President at Anne Arundel Community College and an intern in the state senate, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of civic education.

When people have knowledge of how the world around them works, they have the power to change it. Civic knowledge and engagement are crucial for the health of our democracy and the development of responsible, informed citizens.

Without civic education, the next generation will not have the knowledge they need as future citizens. We cannot be a government of the people, for the people, and by the people without the power of civic knowledge. When people are not civically educated, they cannot be truly civically engaged.

However, these areas often receive insufficient emphasis in our educational system and we are currently feeling the effects. Civic engagement among young people is at a low, with half of voting-age students not showing up to the ballot box.

The Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence program represents a vital step forward towards that goal of democratic empowerment. By formally recognizing students who excel in their understanding and participation in civic life, we can:

- Motivate students to engage more deeply with civic education and activities.
- Highlight the importance of being informed about local, state, and national issues.
- Encourage schools to prioritize civic learning in their curricula.

In conclusion, SB 762 is not just about recognizing deserving students; it's about investing in the future of our democracy and ensuring that our young people are prepared to contribute positively to society. I urge the committee to support the passage of this bill, paving the way for a more engaged, informed, and civic-minded generation.

It is for these reasons I request a favorable committee report.

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