



Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Testimony in Support of SB 762

February 13, 2024

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

My name is Julie A. Rosen, and I live in Montgomery County Maryland. I submit this letter to express my strong support for Senate Bill 762, which aims to establish the Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence program.

As an advocate and long-lived learner in Maryland –from kindergarten through PhD awarded from the University of Maryland, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of civic education. Civic knowledge and engagement are crucial for the health of our democracy and the development of responsible, informed citizens. However, these areas often receive insufficient emphasis in our educational system.

The Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence program represents a vital step forward. 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.

As a child of the 1960s, my formal education complemented the informal education about civics absorbed through community action ‘on the streets.’ My first exposure to the power of the people in the community was the successful outcome of a teachers action that improved the working environment of dedicated teachers, as well as the eye-opening explanations of why ‘people power’ is so important. And that all happened before the protests across the country in the late 60s. That exposure happened over 50 years ago, but equivalent issues and collaborative, community discussions are crucial today; perhaps even more wide-spread and urgent with the impact –good and bad—of social media’s mis- and dis- information.

I recognize the findings of The State of Maryland’s Civic Education: Final Report from Maryland’s Civic Architecture Symposium* that “The state of Maryland is distinguished from other states nationally... The Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) requires that students earning a diploma must acquire “three credits including one credit in United States history, one credit in world history, and one credit in local, state, and national government aligned with the Maryland High School Assessment for government.”” However, sitting in a classroom does not guarantee absorption of the

important and implementable principles of a Civics curriculum. Students can be encouraged by community –as well as education—members if their absorption is supported through participation at school- and extracurricular- activities; activities that require additional time and attention that may be a challenge for the more vulnerable students in disenfranchised populations (including African Americans, women, lower socio-economic groups, and people with disabilities). The metrics identified in SB762 elaborate the benefit (seals and diploma recognition, among others) of such participation, and the longer-term nature that a civics education requires to take hold in the adults that we hope our students will become.

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.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,

Julie A. Rosen, Ph.D.

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* <https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Documents/DCAA/SocialStudies/CivicsReport.pdf>