

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Testimony in Support of SB 762

February 15, 2024

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

My name is Heather Wyatt-Nichol—I work in Baltimore City, and I live in Baltimore County. I am here to express my strong support for Senate Bill 762, which aims to establish the Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence program.

I'm also a professor with over 20 years of experience, teaching a variety of courses including American government, the Presidency, Political Institutions, Public Policy, and numerous courses in Public Administration.

As parent of a high school junior in the Baltimore County School System, 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.

During these divisive times in American politics, it is essential to educate and prepare responsible, engaged, citizens—regardless of party ideology—to sustain democracy.

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,

Heather Wyatt-Nichol, PhD

drhwyattnichol@outlook.com