

**\_SB762 Testimony- Aleena Malik.pdf**

Uploaded by: Aleena Malik

Position: FAV

## **Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

### **Testimony in Support of SB 762**

**February 16, 2024**

Hello, My name is Aleena Malik, and I am currently a Junior At Crofton High School I am a part of the Maryland Civic Education Coalition Youth Advisory Council. I am here to express my support for Senate Bill 762, the Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence.

According to multiple studies, students who received an excellence award were the students on the verge of withdrawing their enrollment, however, their excellence award they received they decided to continue their studies and were more motivated to do so.

This significantly shows that student recognition positively impacts student retention and academic success. Students respond to extrinsic motivators such as awards, feel rewarded, and validated resulting in strong intrinsic motivations to put in their best effort in their academics making them confident to become leaders to motivate others.

As a junior in high school, I volunteered countless long hours and put in my best effort to serve my community to make an impact. I feel like I and countless other students should be recognized for the hard efforts we make. Not only does this bill symbolize the value of serving in the community. It recognizes inspiring leaders who make a significant impact in our community and motivate others to do the same. The Youth will be our next leaders in strengthening our democracy and they should be recognized as such.

The Seal of Civic Excellence will motivate students like me to be these inspiring leaders who are actively involved in our democracy and who are willing to stand up for civics here in Maryland.

I urge the committee to support SB 762, reinforcing the message that the involvement of the youth is crucial for our state's democratic health.

Aleena Malik  
Anne Arundel County

**SB762\_MD Youth Advisory Council\_Fav.pdf**

Uploaded by: Alexander Hossainkhail

Position: FAV



Maryland Youth Advisory Council  
c/o Governor's Office of Crime  
Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services  
100 Community Place,  
Crownsville, MD 21032

Grace Minakowski, *Chair*  
Will O'Donnell, *Vice-Chair*  
Folashade Epebinu, *Secretary*

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February 7, 2024

**Re: SB 762** | Education - Maryland Civic Excellence Program - Established

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

The Maryland Youth Advisory Council prides itself on being a coalition of diverse young advocates and leaders who serve as a voice for youth in the state of Maryland. As leaders in our communities, and as appointees of the Governor, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House, Maryland Association of Student Councils, Maryland Higher Education Commission, and the University System of Maryland, we take every opportunity to address relevant issues by influencing legislation, spreading public awareness and serving as a liaison between youth and policymakers regarding issues facing youth.

**SB 762** supports the ongoing progress of motivating youth to be civically engaged, directly promoting civic readiness for our future leaders. Despite the evident dedication of students across the state, their civic contributions often go unrecognized. Being civically engaged benefits all corners of a young person's life, whether that be in academic performance or their social-emotional well-being<sup>1</sup>. As demonstrated through the Maryland Youth Advisory Council, Maryland Civics and Education Coalition, and many others, engaging in the political process at a young age helps build an understanding of their surroundings, issues facing their community, and mental development.<sup>2</sup> Even with these clear benefits, Maryland continues to face a decrease in youth participation in civic initiatives. **SB 762** ensures the continuation of youth involvement in civics by providing not only motivation but acknowledgement of actions that will lead Maryland into a brighter future—maintaining the integrity of civic engagement. Maryland already applauds students for their academics or sports with medals and other forms of support, and we must honor those civically engaged with the same level of support.

**SB 762** provides recognition to students who promote “civic readiness and civic engagement” in school systems across Maryland. Furthermore supporting schools as a whole that accommodate civic learning and serve as a “Center of Civic Excellence”—providing much-needed incentives to promote a wider spread of civic engagement and education.

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<sup>1</sup> “Why Is Youth Civic Engagement Important?” *CIRCLE*, [circle.tufts.edu/understanding-youth-civic-engagement/why-it-important#:~:text=Youth%20engagement%20can%20lead%20to,a%20source%20of%20economic%20mobility](https://circle.tufts.edu/understanding-youth-civic-engagement/why-it-important#:~:text=Youth%20engagement%20can%20lead%20to,a%20source%20of%20economic%20mobility). Accessed 15 Feb. 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Conner, Jerusha, Michael Posner, and Bright Nsowaa. 2022. “The Relationship between Student Voice and Student Engagement in Urban High Schools.” *The Urban Review* 54 (5). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-022-00637-2>.



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**SB 762** not only uplifts individual youth civic engagement but also highlights schools that promote collective civic engagement across Maryland. The Council has voted in favor of supporting **SB 762**, as it aligns with the Council's Legislative Platform supporting:

- a. Youth involvement in the creation and revision of legislation impacting youth. (Article I. Clause D); and
- b. Opportunities for youth to be a part of community and statewide decisions. (Article I. Clause F).

**SB 762** reflects, acknowledges, and *admires* the dedication youth have demonstrated toward civic engagement; for themselves, their peers, and their future. The Council believes it is the duty of the Maryland General Assembly to pass legislation that will elevate, protect, and advance the youth generations to come. For these reasons, the Council supports **SB 762** and respectfully requests a favorable report from the committee. We thank you for your consideration of our position.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "G. Minakowski", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Grace Minakowski, Chair  
Maryland Youth Advisory Council

# **Written Testimony of Andrew Marks in Support of SB**

Uploaded by: Andrew Marks

Position: FAV



## 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:

I am an attorney and a longtime resident of Montgomery County. I am pleased to express my strong support for Senate Bill 762, which aims to establish the Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence program. And I commend Senators Kagan and Ready for their leadership on this important piece of legislation.

I believe that is essential to our democracy that our students are prepared to be informed, engaged, responsible participants in our democracy. I believe our schools can and should be doing more to provide our students with the tools they need to play their essential role as citizens and as voters.

Speaking personally, I can say that reflecting on all of the terrific classes I had between high school, college, and law school, the class that had the most profound impact on my life was my high school civics class.

As the recent Report of the Educating for American Democracy Initiative states:

*“The relative neglect of civic education in the past half-century – a period of wrenching change – is one important cause of our civic and political dysfunction. . . Excellence in civic and history education represents a part of the solution; it should be a foundation of our national civic infrastructure.”*

The establishment of a Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence program represents an important and constructive 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.

I therefore strongly support the passage of SB 762. This legislation 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 play an active and constructive role in our democratic 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.

Respectfully submitted,

*Andrew H. Marks*

[amarks@markslawoffices.com](mailto:amarks@markslawoffices.com)

(202) 253-2307



**Kalil, Anisa SB0762 Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Anisa Kalil

Position: FAV

February 15th, 2024

Chair Brian J. Feldman  
Vice Chair Cheryl C. Kagan  
The Senate of Maryland  
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

**Position: Support for Senate Bill 0762**

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

My name is Anisa Kalil. I am in 10th grade, and I live in Baltimore County, Maryland. I write to you today to express my firm support of Senate Bill 0762, establishing the Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence Program.

As a lifelong public school student, I have witnessed firsthand the power that civic education holds in our country. By providing an enhanced focus on community involvement, civic engagement is imperative to improving our democracy as a whole.

The Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence program will be a major step forward in achieving this goal. By mobilizing the Maryland Government to create the Civic Excellence Program, we can recognize students, schools, and organizations that are dedicated to civics and civic engagement. In doing so, we can not only motivate students to use their voices and prioritize education around impactful community issues, but enhance key parts of democracy that are already in play.

Through organizations such as student government, speech extracurriculars, and the Maryland Civic Education Coalition, I have personally been fortunate enough to make civic action a cornerstone of my education. However, this is not the case for everyone. There are many students that may be interested, yet not encouraged to take part in these activities or use their voices to promote this beneficial change. Establishing the Seal of Civic Excellence would provide for more strengthening of these activities, providing all Marylanders with an acknowledgement and importance of being civically involved, even beyond what is noted here. This bill aims to support democracy and positive contributions to our society and, thus, I urge a favorable report on this bill.

Thank you very much for your time.

Best regards,  
Anisa Kalil

# **SB762 Prepared Testimony Department of Service and**

Uploaded by: Darron Monteiro

Position: FAV

PREPARED TESTIMONY OF PAUL MONTEIRO

SECRETARY, MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF SERVICE & CIVIC INNOVATION

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB762. I am here in my role as Secretary of the Department of Service and Civic Innovation. This new state agency is charged with creating two new streams of service, Service Year Option and Maryland Corps as well as expanding a legacy service program, AmeriCorps. The Department also plays a leading role in promoting volunteerism across the state as well as signature Days of Service such as MLK Jr. Day.

SB762 promotes community service and civic engagement. By offering incentives for young people to be engaged earlier and involved in their community, we can see benefits to both. We also know service is a nonpartisan strategy that helps to bring people together across lines of difference. By promoting these values for young people, they will be able to develop and incorporate them into their personal and professional lives as they become future community leaders.

Additionally, this legislation enlists and rewards schools for promoting service and encouraging academic achievement. By doing so, we can expect improved educational outcomes as schools are further encouraged to celebrate academic excellence and civic engagement.

The objectives of this legislation are closely tied with the objectives of the Department of Service and Civic Innovation. We support HB762 to augment the additional emphasis on service in the State of Maryland and encourage young Marylanders to contribute positively to their communities.

**MD4CS\_MOST\_MEC\_SB762.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ellie Mitchell

Position: FAV



**Senate Bill 762**  
**Education, Energy & the Environment Committee - Friday February 16, 2024**  
**Position: Favorable**

The Maryland Out of School Time Network (MOST) is a statewide organization dedicated to closing opportunity gaps by expanding both the quantity and quality of afterschool and summer learning opportunities for school-aged young people. MOST serves as the backbone organization for the Maryland Coalition for Community Schools. The Maryland Coalition for Community Schools, founded in 2016, advocates for student and family success by leading the charge to expand the Community School Model in Maryland. The Maryland Education Coalition (MEC) advocates for adequate funding, equitable policies, and transparent accountability statewide.

MOST, MD4CS and MEC support Senate Bill 762 as a common sense, fiscally neutral approach to encourage students to participate in civics education and for schools to provide expansive opportunities for students in civics. For students to truly understand the world and for our democracy to continue, we need young people to practice citizenship and build knowledge of the systems and processes by which we engage actively engage as citizens. Unfortunately, as we juggle the complex mandates and requirements for students to graduate, civics doesn't always get the full attention it deserves within the curriculum. For this reason, we also support House Bill 50 which would establish a Commission on History, Culture, and Civics education which would make recommendations to further improve the depth and breadth of curricular and extracurricular opportunities for students.

Students benefit from recognition programs in strengthening applications for post-secondary opportunities and scholarships. Schools benefit from recognition programs in communicating their value to family and communities. Everyone benefits when we have educated and involved citizens participating actively in our society.

On behalf of MOST, MD4CS, we thank Senators Kagan and Ready for sponsoring Senate Bill 762 and urge the committee to provide a favorable report.

Rick Tyler, Co-Chair, MEC  
[md.ed.coalition@gmail.com](mailto:md.ed.coalition@gmail.com)

Ellie Mitchell, Co-Chair, MEC & Executive Director, MOST Network/MD4CS,  
[emitchell@mostnetwork.org](mailto:emitchell@mostnetwork.org)

**Maryland Out of School Time Network / Maryland Coalition for Community Schools**

1500 Union Ave / Suite 2300  
Baltimore MD 21211 / 410 374-7692  
[www.mostnetwork.org](http://www.mostnetwork.org)

# **SB762 - MD-CEC Testimony & Signing Letter.pdf**

Uploaded by: Genie Massey

Position: FAV



## **Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

### **SB762 Education – Maryland Civic Excellence Program – Established**

**February 16, 2024**

#### **Position: Support**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Committee Members:

The Maryland Civic Education Coalition enthusiastically supports Senate Bill 762, to establish the Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence program. Our commitment to fostering informed, engaged citizens aligns with this important initiative, designed to honor and uplift the civic engagement of Maryland's youth.

The Seal of Civic Excellence not only celebrates but elevates students' dedication to civic understanding and societal contributions, positioning them as exemplary figures in our democracy. It assures that Maryland's youth are not only recognized within our state but stand competitively on a national stage, especially against peers from states with similar civic accolades.

Granting this seal empowers our students, acknowledging their profound impact and commitment to civic duty. It signals a revered commitment to fostering a generation that is not only civically knowledgeable but also competitively poised in a global context of civic education.

Supporting Senate Bill 762 underscores Maryland's dedication to enhancing its educational system, preparing citizens for leadership and service with a prestigious seal that embodies excellence. It will strengthen Maryland's reputation for its commitment to civic excellence, boasting citizens who are not only distinguished but also globally competitive.

**We urge this esteemed committee to report favorably on SB762.**

**Genie Massey, MD-CEC Program Coordinator**

Washington County Resident, District 2A





**Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

**SB762 Education – Maryland Civic Excellence Program – Established**

**February 16, 2024**

**Position: Support**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Committee Members:

As a coalition dedicated to civic education and empowerment, we express our unified support for establishing a Seal of Civic Excellence in Maryland public schools. This program is a visionary step towards recognizing and promoting the vital role of civic knowledge, skills, and engagement among PK-12 students. By formally acknowledging both students and schools that exhibit a profound commitment to civic involvement, this program will shine a light on the critical importance of civic education in developing participatory, thoughtful citizens.

**This legislation would promote:**

- **Enhanced Civic Education:** Encourages comprehensive civic learning, ensuring students grasp the fundamentals of democracy and civic responsibilities.
- **Active Student Engagement:** Promotes student involvement in civic and community activities, fostering a sense of responsibility and belonging.
- **Critical Thinking and Diversity:** Equips students to address societal issues thoughtfully, valuing diverse perspectives.
- **Community and Democracy Strengthening:** Extends impact beyond schools, encouraging community partnership and participation in civic life.

We believe the Seal of Civic Excellence will significantly benefit Maryland's youth, schools, and communities by promoting civic knowledge, skills, and engagement. This program is a crucial investment in our democratic future, preparing students to be active, informed participants in the democratic process.

We urge the Maryland General Assembly to support this initiative, and our coalition is ready to assist in any way to ensure its successful implementation.

**We the undersigned respectfully urge the Committee to report favorably on SB762.**

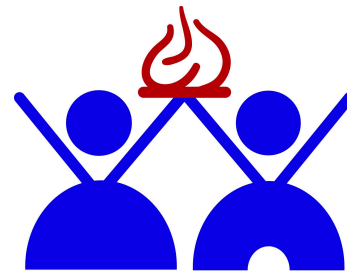


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of MARYLAND



Maryland

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LIBERTY'S PROMISE



MARYLAND CENTER  
FOR HISTORY AND CULTURE



**ST JOHN'S**  
**College**

ANNAPOLIS • SANTA FE

# **SB762 - MD-CEC Testimony & Signing Letter.pdf**

Uploaded by: Genie Massey

Position: FAV



## **Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

### **SB762 Education – Maryland Civic Excellence Program – Established**

**February 16, 2024**

#### **Position: Support**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Committee Members:

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The Seal of Civic Excellence not only celebrates but elevates students' dedication to civic understanding and societal contributions, positioning them as exemplary figures in our democracy. It assures that Maryland's youth are not only recognized within our state but stand competitively on a national stage, especially against peers from states with similar civic accolades.

Granting this seal empowers our students, acknowledging their profound impact and commitment to civic duty. It signals a revered commitment to fostering a generation that is not only civically knowledgeable but also competitively poised in a global context of civic education.

Supporting Senate Bill 762 underscores Maryland's dedication to enhancing its educational system, preparing citizens for leadership and service with a prestigious seal that embodies excellence. It will strengthen Maryland's reputation for its commitment to civic excellence, boasting citizens who are not only distinguished but also globally competitive.

**We urge this esteemed committee to report favorably on SB762.**

**Genie Massey, MD-CEC Program Coordinator**

Washington County Resident, District 2A



**Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

**SB762 Education – Maryland Civic Excellence Program – Established**

**February 16, 2024**

**Position: Support**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Committee Members:

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**This legislation would promote:**

- **Enhanced Civic Education:** Encourages comprehensive civic learning, ensuring students grasp the fundamentals of democracy and civic responsibilities.
- **Active Student Engagement:** Promotes student involvement in civic and community activities, fostering a sense of responsibility and belonging.
- **Critical Thinking and Diversity:** Equips students to address societal issues thoughtfully, valuing diverse perspectives.
- **Community and Democracy Strengthening:** Extends impact beyond schools, encouraging community partnership and participation in civic life.

We believe the Seal of Civic Excellence will significantly benefit Maryland's youth, schools, and communities by promoting civic knowledge, skills, and engagement. This program is a crucial investment in our democratic future, preparing students to be active, informed participants in the democratic process.

We urge the Maryland General Assembly to support this initiative, and our coalition is ready to assist in any way to ensure its successful implementation.

**We the undersigned respectfully urge the Committee to report favorably on SB762.**

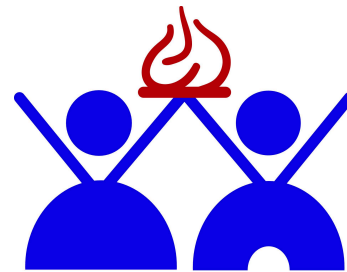


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# **SB 762 FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Hailey Wildesen

Position: FAV

## SB 762 FAV

Good Afternoon Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and esteemed Committee members. My name is Hailey Wildesen and I am a senior at Northern Garrett High School in Garrett County. I am a member of the Maryland Association of Student Councils and the Maryland Civic Education Coalition's Youth Advisory Council. I would like to share my personal perspective on Civic Seals. As a society, we have a responsibility to ensure that our students receive a high-quality education that prepares them to be active and engaged citizens. This includes providing us with the knowledge, skills, and values we need to participate in the democratic process and to make informed decisions about the issues that affect our communities. The creation of civic seals to recognize students who are dedicated to civic education would be an important step toward achieving this goal. These seals would recognize and reward students who have demonstrated a commitment to civic engagement and who have acquired the knowledge and skills necessary to participate effectively in our democracy. Moreover, the civic seals would serve as valuable credentials for students as they apply to college or enter the workforce. It would demonstrate to potential employers and higher education institutions that we as students have taken the initiative to engage in civic education, and are therefore more likely to be informed, responsible, and active members of their community. Through my work with the Maryland Civic Education Coalition and multiple other organizations, I have gained skills which I have implemented locally in my district to help engage other youth in voter registration and the democratic process. This is a prime example of how influential civic education can be to increase youth democratic participation. I strongly support the implementation of civic seals so we can help to ensure that our future leaders are informed, engaged, and committed to making a positive difference in their communities and in our country as a whole. Therefore I urge a favorable report on SB 762. Thank you!

# HLWN Supports SB 762.pdf

Uploaded by: Heather Wyatt-Nichol

Position: FAV

## **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](mailto:drhwyattnichol@outlook.com)

**SB 762 - SUPP - EHE - Civic Engagement.pdf**

Uploaded by: Henry Bogdan

Position: FAV

**February 16, 2024**

**Testimony on Senate Bill 762**  
**Education - Maryland Civic Excellence Program - Established**  
**Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee**

**Position: Favorable**

Maryland Nonprofits is a statewide association of almost 1800 nonprofit organizations and institutions. We urge you to support Senate Bill 762, to recognize and promote the vital role of civic knowledge, skills, and engagement among public school students in Maryland.

Senate Bill 762 establishes a program to formally acknowledge both students and schools that exhibit a profound commitment to civic involvement, by highlighting the critical importance of civic education in developing participatory, thoughtful citizens, and in strengthening our democracy.

As an organization we encourage nonprofits to support public policies that will facilitate and promote the public's engagement in their government by freely exercising their right to vote and by advocating their views on policy to their elected representatives.

This legislation will promote enhanced civic education, the appreciation of diverse perspectives, and the importance of active engagement in the democratic process. In short it will foster the critical thinking essential for an engaged citizenry.

At a time when many forces seem to be alienating the public from their own government, programs like the Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence are crucial investments in our democratic future.

We urge your committee to give Senate Bill 762 a Favorable Report.

# **SB762-CivicSeals-Testimony-rosen.pdf**

Uploaded by: Julie Rosen

Position: FAV



## **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.

julie.a.rosen@verizon.net

[

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

# **SB762 Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Juliette Leeth

Position: FAV



## **Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**

### **Testimony in Support of SB 762**

**February 16, 2024**

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

My name is Juliette Leeth, and I am currently a college student at the University of Maryland College Park. I am here to express my earnest support for Senate Bill 762, the Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence, through my personal testimony.

This bill is significant to me and my peers as it validates our efforts in civic engagement. It's not just an award; it's a recognition that young Marylanders' contributions to democracy are invaluable.

I've learned firsthand about Maryland's National Assembly after being awarded the opportunity to page for the Maryland Senate. While a senior in high school I spent two weeks in 2023 in Maryland's Senate and House sessions. I was exposed to the process of government as I watched our representatives enact, debate and discuss legislation. This experience highlighted the impact of active civic participation. The Seal of Civic Excellence motivates students like me to become informed and active participants in our democracy.

I urge the committee to support SB 762, reinforcing the message that the involvement of young people is crucial for our state's democratic health.

Thank you for considering my testimony and for the opportunity to express my views.

Sincerely,

Juliette Leeth  
Montgomery County, MD

**SB0726 Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Katherine Massey

Position: FAV

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

My name is Katherine Massey, and I am currently a college student at the University of Maryland, College Park. Through my personal testimony, I am here to express my earnest support for Senate Bill 762, the Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence.

This bill is significant to me and my peers as it validates our efforts in civic engagement. It's not just an award; it's a recognition that young Marylanders' contributions to democracy are invaluable.

I've learned firsthand through my work with the League of Women Voters, the National Honors Society, and the Maryland Civic Education Coalition that active civic participation makes a huge impact on our communities around the state. We need to encourage more students to participate in activities like these to make them more informed citizens and active members of our communities. Just a small encouragement like the Seal of Civic Excellence would motivate students like me to become informed and active participants in our democracy.

I urge the committee to support SB 762, reinforcing the message that the involvement of young people is crucial for our state's democratic health.

Thank you for considering my testimony and for the opportunity to express my views.

Sincerely,

Katherine Massey  
Washington County

**SB762\_MSEA\_Lamb\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lauren Lamb

Position: FAV

**FAVORABLE**  
**Senate Bill 762**  
**Education - Maryland Civic Excellence Program - Established**

**Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment**  
**February 16, 2024**

**Lauren Lamb**  
**Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 762, which would establish the Maryland Civic Excellence Program as a voluntary program in which local school systems may participate to recognize students and public schools that promote the civic readiness and civic engagement of students in public schools in the State. It would also require that each participating school system report to the Department annually on the program.

MSEA represents 75,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 39 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

MSEA supports legislation that enhances citizen participation in the political and voting process. The program described in this bill would encourage students to register to vote, participate in civic-minded extracurricular and volunteer activities, and strive for academic achievement in social studies, government, and civics coursework. We also urge greater equity of access to such educational experiences and support efforts to ensure a diverse and holistic social studies and civics education for all students.

**We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 762.**

**testimony for SB762 - FAV - Lena Morreale Scott 2-**

Uploaded by: Lena Morreale Scott

Position: FAV





## COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

3203 Benjamin Building  
3942 Campus Drive  
College Park, Maryland 20742

### **EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE Senate Bill 762 – Education – Maryland Civic Excellence Program – Established February 16, 2024**

#### **Favorable Report (FAV)**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts on Senate Bill 762. My name is Lena Morreale Scott and I serve as the Director of Civic Education & Engagement for the College of Education and as the Principal Investigator of the Maryland Democracy Initiative at the University of Maryland, College Park. I am also a co-founder and co-chair of the Maryland Civic Education Coalition. I have worked in the field of civic education for more than 35 years as a Maryland public school Social Studies teacher, as curriculum and professional development specialist in a Maryland-based nonprofit civic education organization, as a member and leader of multiple state and national nonpartisan civic education coalitions. At the College of Education, I have taught pre-service Social Studies teachers and I now lead our university's new Maryland Democracy Initiative, which leverages scholars and practitioners from our college as well as our School of Public Policy, the Philip Merrill College of Journalism, and the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences. Together, we strengthen democracy through research, innovative teaching and learning, and democratic engagement opportunities.

I am honored to be here with you today and to express my support for one of the most fundamental ways to strengthen our shared democracy: meaningful, equitable, and high-quality civic education. As you know, an informed and engaged citizenry is essential to representative democracy, responsive government, and to strong communities. SB762 will strengthen democracy education by incentivizing and celebrating students who are especially knowledgeable, prepared, and civically-engaged. It will also incentivize and celebrate schools that demonstrate excellence in preparing students for life-long service and civic engagement.

Survey after survey, study after study, test scores after test scores show that Americans' civic knowledge is remarkably low and that many people lack important civic skills such as dialogue, consensus-building, and information / media literacy. We also know that many people are losing confidence in their ability to make a difference in their democracy. Effective civic education makes a difference. Students who participate in high-quality civics are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and experiences to participate more successfully and they have the agency necessary to believe their participation matters.

With the creation of the Civic Excellence Program, Maryland can reverse an alarming trend which has marginalized the teaching of Social Studies to emphasize reading and math scores at the expense of other competencies, like civic competency. For example, federal spending per pupil spending on civic education is 50 cents compared to \$50 on STEM education. The Maryland Civic Excellence Program gives us the opportunity to rededicate our attention to teaching for civic engagement.

There is good news, too. While there is so much focus on partisanship and division, there are well-

established “proven” and “promising” best practices in civic education --- that have been established by cross-partisan scholars and practitioners. There are also exciting innovations happening in civic education, including by many of the educators and civic partners who are members of our Maryland Civic Education Coalition. With The Maryland Civic Excellence Program, we want to ensure that all students have access to those high-quality experiences and that all teachers have access to professional development to ensure they can use high-impact practices with success and fidelity.

We believe SB762 has the power to amplify many of the priorities of the Moore Administration, including the programs and initiatives of the new Department of Service and Civic Innovation. As you know, students must complete 75 hours of service-learning to graduate from high school. Service-learning is one of those high impact civic education practices. Through the Maryland Civic Excellence Program, we can catalyze students’ positive experiences with service-learning to prepare and inspire young people to life-long service and civic engagement.

We recognize the importance of empowering each local school system to develop its own criteria for awarding students and schools with a Civic Excellence Seal, if it opts into the program. Looking ahead, we hope the University of Maryland and our many partners in the Coalition and the Maryland State Department of Education will be able to support district leaders in developing their programs in ways that are measurable, impactful, and equitable. As the program matures, we hope to partner with others to provide school leaders resources to support teacher professional development and innovation. We would also like to see future programs include opportunities for students to be celebrated for participating in civic-themed extra-curricular activities and elective courses from all content areas, not just Social Studies. We know student journalists who cover local news and student “citizen scientists” are engaging in their civic life and contributing to the public good, too! We would also like to see opportunities for outstanding elementary and middle schools to be recognized. Many of our most innovative approaches to service-learning and civic education start with our youngest learners. To be clear, we are not suggesting amendments to the current bill. We are simply enthusiastic about what may be possible in the future. We stand ready to support the program’s success.

Imagine building our shared democracy together, with teaching and learning that celebrates and elevates life-long service and civic participation. The Maryland Civic Excellence Program strengthens the civic mission of our schools and our democracy’s foundation. Thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts regarding Senate Bill 762. I strongly urge a favorable report.



Lena Morreale Scott  
Director, Civic Education & Engagement Initiative  
Principal Investigator, [Maryland Democracy Initiative](#)  
Co-chair, [Maryland Civic Education Coalition](#)  
Maryland Representative, [CivX Now State Policy Task Force](#)  
University of Maryland College of Education

# **SB0762 Education - Maryland Civic Excellence Progr**

Uploaded by: Mara Babb

Position: FAV

23/24-GA-\_\_ - SB0762

**Title:** *Education - Maryland Civic Excellence Program - Established*

**Sponsored by:** Senator Kagan and Senator Ready

**Committee Assignment:** *Education, Energy, and the Environment*

**FOR** establishing the Maryland Civic Excellence Program as a voluntary program in which local school systems may participate to recognize students and public schools that promote the civic readiness and civic engagement of students in public schools in the State; and requiring by July 1, 2026, and each July 1 thereafter, each participating local school system to submit to the Department a report on the Program in the most recent school year.

**Proposed Position: SUPPORT**

**Resolution:** *23/24-GA-\_\_ Co-authored by Mara Babb, Brenton Meade, and Daphne Wang, the 2023-24 MASC State Legislative Affairs Coordinators; Diana Bonilla-Prado, Nora Murthy, and Meerub Malik*

WHEREAS, MASC unanimously supported this bill in the 2023 Legislative Session, and

WHEREAS, this bill would encourage more students to engage themselves civically which would increase civic engagement while recognizing student achievement, and

WHEREAS, this bill would intrinsically award students by allowing for self-reflection, civic efficacy, and increased societal engagement, and

WHEREAS, this bill encourages involvement in student-ran civic organizations to keep youth informed on the legislative process, and

WHEREAS, MASC supports “School based programs and related activities that encourage civic participation” (MASC Platform, Plank II; J), be it hereby

RESOLVED that the Maryland Association of Student Councils supports SB0762.

## **2-16 SB 762 - Education – Maryland Civic Excellenc**

Uploaded by: Nancy Soreng

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE**

**SB 762 - Education – Maryland Civic Excellence Program – Established**

**POSITION: Support**

**BY: Nancy Soreng, President**

**Date: February 16, 2024**

The by-laws of the League of Women Voters state that purpose of the corporation “*shall be to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government...*” Fostering a knowledge of how government works and how to impact public policy, as well as how to become engaged in one’s community to make it better for its residents, is essential to our mission and this legislation provides an incentive for young people and their schools to do just that.

Establishing a Seal of Civic engagement and a recognition program for schools which have a high participation rate among graduating seniors, would send a message that civic engagement is a worthy endeavor and should be recognized as a valuable achievement.

Civic education can occur in many settings beyond the school day, such volunteering with service organizations, participating in political rallies and campaigns, registering voters and working at polling places on Election Day.

Ensuring the future of our democratic republic is dependent on fostering civic knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions. Maryland students who excel academically in social studies and exceed expectations in volunteer and service-learning should be recognized for their achievements. This recognition could serve as a concrete signal to colleges and employers that students who have earned the Seal are ready to be productive members of their college community or their workplace.

We urge a favorable report on SB 762.

# **Testimony .pdf**

Uploaded by: Safora Noor

Position: FAV

Chair Brian Feldman  
Vice Chair Cheryl Kagan  
The Senate of Maryland  
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 Safora Noor, and I am currently a High School Student at Towson High School. I am here to express my earnest support for Senate Bill 762, the Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence, through my personal testimony.

Through my experience in many organizations such as my regional and state student government and non-profit organizations, I have worked with individuals who have spent years serving their communities. I have met other students who volunteer themselves every time for things that promote civics. For me personally, being engaged in such organizations has allowed me to learn more about how the government and democracy work. Being involved means that I and my peers have put in several hours teaching others about civics and learning new things ourselves. With everything that I have done in organizations like Maryland Association of Student Councils and Dear Asian Youth, I have enjoyed participating in the broader community and impacting others in a positive light. This bill is significant to me and my peers as it validates our efforts in civic engagement. It's not just an award; it's a recognition that young Marylanders' contributions to democracy are invaluable.

The Seal of Civic Excellence motivates students like me to become informed and active participants in our democracy. The many provisions in the bill motivate students in the state to take government classes and perform well in those classes. Such classes allow students to learn about the democratic process and give students many opportunities to get involved in civics. Personally, classes like AP Government and Politics allowed me to gain insight on statewide and national legislation, which motivated me to have my voice heard. Additionally, the service learning hour requirement motivates students to be civically engaged not just for the sake of getting enough service learning hours, but to do something from which the student can learn more about civics and educate others on what civics is.

I urge the committee to support SB 762, reinforcing the message that the involvement of young people is crucial for our state's democratic health.

Thank you for considering my testimony and for the opportunity to express my views.

Sincerely,  
Safora Noor  
Baltimore County



# **Testimony.pdf.pdf**

Uploaded by: Samantha Fowler

Position: FAV

February 12, 2024

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

My name is Samantha Fowler, and I live in Montgomery 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 a teacher, 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.

I have facilitated meaningful civic education programs, such as Project Citizen and We the People, in my classroom. I have witnessed how civic engagement not only makes political concepts more accessible to students, but also encourages them to be active in civic life in their community. I have had several students who were inspired to do their own policy research projects or intern with local officials because of powerful civic opportunities at my school. The Seal of Civic Excellence will encourage even more students to understand issues in their local communities and how to approach these issues considering multiple perspectives and in a nonpartisan way.

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,  
Samantha Fowler

# **Kagan Civic Excellence Testimony 2024.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sen. Cheryl Kagan

Position: FAV

CHERYL C. KAGAN  
Legislative District 17  
Montgomery County

Vice Chair  
Education, Energy, and  
the Environment Committee

Joint Audit and Evaluation Committee  
Joint Committee on Federal Relations



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## THE SENATE OF MARYLAND ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

### Maryland Civic Excellence Program (SB762)

Senate Education, Energy, & the Environment Committee: February 16, 2024, 9:00am

The functioning of our democracy depends on the next generation's engagement in civic affairs. According to the Fordham Institute, Maryland's civics curriculum is strong but has room for improvement.<sup>1</sup>

Successful completion of civics courses in schools is associated with higher rates of volunteering, higher scores on the AP Government exam, and higher voter turnout among young adults.<sup>2</sup>

[SB762](#) would encourage civic engagement by creating a "Maryland Civic Excellence Program." Participating local school systems would have the opportunity to:

- Award a Seal of Civic Excellence to high school students who:
  - Excel on civics exams;
  - Succeed in civics courses (an A or a B in US History, Modern World History, and American Government); and
  - Serve their communities. (At least 30 of 75 total Student Service-Learning hours must focus on community and civic engagement.)
- Designate a public school as a Center of Civic Excellence if at least 50% of its students have earned a Seal.

Students who apply and earn a Seal would get a cord, a medal, or an insignia on their diploma. Schools would receive a banner, a Governor's citation, or a citation from the MD State Department of Education.

Eleven other states (AZ, CA, GA, NV, NY, OH, OK, PA, and VA) either already have or are in the process of implementing a Civic Seal Program. Let's follow in their footsteps and reward future generations for their involvement in our democracy!

This bill is similar to [Senator Ready's 2023 bill](#), which passed the Senate unanimously last year. This year, he and I are working together to emphasize the bipartisan support of this endeavor. Differences from last year's bill include:

- Simplifying the application review process by removing the point system-- thus reducing cost to local school systems;

<sup>1</sup> Stern, Jeremy, Alison Brody, José Gregory, Stephen Griffith, Jonathan Pulvers, David Griffith, Amber Foreword, and Chester Finn. "The State of State Standards for Civics and U.S. History in 2021 about the Fordham Institute Suggested Citation," June 2021. <https://fordhaminstitute.org/sites/default/files/publication/pdfs/20210623-state-state-standards-civics-and-us-history-20210.pdf#page=15>.

<sup>2</sup> Shapiro, Sarah, and Catherine Brown. "The State of Civics Education." Center for American Progress, February 21, 2018. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/state-civics-education/>.

- Removing AP exam scores as a metric of success so as to not unfairly penalize students whose schools do not offer such courses;
- Striking participation in extracurricular activities as a requirement in order to ensure equitable access to the Seal for all students, including those low-income students who may not have time to participate in related extracurricular activities; and
- Delinking voter registration from the Seal so as to avoid disadvantaging students who may not be eligible for voter registration before their high school graduation.

**I urge a favorable report on SB762.**

**SB 762 - State Board - SUPPORT.pdf**

Uploaded by: Zachary Hands

Position: FAV

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**TO:** Senate Education, Energy, and Environment Committee

**BILL:** Senate Bill (SB) 762 – Education – Maryland Civic Excellence Program

**DATE:** February 16, 2024

**POSITION:** Support

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The Maryland State Board of Education (State Board) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) would like to extend our support to SB 762. The State Board and MSDE support the opportunity to recognize students who demonstrate a commitment to civic involvement. The program would be advantageous to any local education agency (LEAs) and school that chooses to participate, and it will grant well-deserved recognition to students who are awarded with the Seal of Civic Excellence.

SB 762 establishes a student and school recognition program as an optional program for local education agencies (LEAs). MSDE may provide guidance to LEAs on aspects of the program as needed. Upon request from participating LEAs, MSDE will create a process for requesting and awarding a citation for schools that earn a designation as a “Center of Civic Excellence” through the efforts of their community.

The criteria for a student to receive the Civic Excellence endorsement from the local board of education includes meeting existing course requirements for high school graduation and a specific service-learning requirement. The Civic Excellence endorsement includes a requirement that of the 75 hours of service learning required for Maryland High school graduates, at least 30 would be completed on a project with a focus on community and civic engagement. These are minimum criteria, however, and the LEA can tailor the program to its local community. The 30-hour requirement can support the goals of Maryland’s current Service- Learning program.

COMAR 13A.03.02.05 states that to graduate from a Maryland High School, students must complete: (a) 75 hours of student service that includes preparation, action, and reflection components and that, at the discretion of the local school system, may begin during the middle grades; or (b) a locally designed program in student service that has been approved by the State Superintendent of Schools.

In Maryland, service-learning is an instructional strategy that combines meaningful service to the community with curriculum-based learning. It is a form of civic education that provides students with opportunities to explore and reflect on what it means to be an active, engaged citizen. LEAs make decisions regarding where and what types of service-learning projects students may engage in to earn credit toward the service-learning graduation requirement.

Community and civic engagement are a pillar of the proposed Maryland Civic Excellence Program, and they are at the heart of the service-learning graduation requirement in Maryland. MSDE will aid any LEA that would like to participate in the Maryland Civic Excellence Program and provide support in the development of service-learning projects. MSDE is available to assist LEAs as needed in confirming that at least 30 of the required 75 hours of service-learning needed to meet the service-learning graduation requirement are devoted to community and civic engagement.

The State Board and MSDE hope that the committee will consider this information as it deliberates SB 762. Please contact Dr. Akilah Alleyne, Executive Director of Government Affairs, Education Policy, and Government Relations, at [Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov](mailto:Akilah.alleyne@maryland.gov) or at 410-767-0504 or Zach Hands, Executive Director of the State Board, at [Zachary.hands1@maryland.gov](mailto:Zachary.hands1@maryland.gov) or at 443-915-6094, if you would like any additional information.



# **SB762%20Testimony%20Template.pdf.pdf**

Uploaded by: Zack (Zack Buster) Johnson

Position: FAV



## **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.

'  
Zack Buster

Phone: 410-215-1403

Email: [zackbuster4md@gmail.com](mailto:zackbuster4md@gmail.com)

All My Links: <https://linktr.ee/zackbuster>