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To whom it may concern,

Maryland needs your support for Senate Bill 762, which proposes the establishment of the Seal of Civic Excellence in Maryland, a critically important milestone in achieving better civic engagement and education in our new generations of students. As a student in Maryland's education system myself who has seen the glaring deficiencies in our civic knowledge as a whole - especially that of Maryland students - I believe that SB 762 is an opportunity too good to pass up.

Much like the Maryland Seal of Biliteracy, which you may know is often offered by many public schools around Maryland that rewards student proficiency in listening, writing, reading, and speaking skills in a language other than English, the premise of an award for excellence rewarding specific skills is extremely relevant within school, teacher, and student cultures throughout high school careers. The Seal of Biliteracy is often spoken about in language classrooms, with its flyers always on display around the school and frequently mentioned by foreign language teachers. Being one of the primary sources of motivation for students to take higher-level language classes up to the AP level, its effects have been proven to have increased the rate of foreign language competency within Maryland and students within classes such as Foreign Language 3, 4, and AP. The Seal of Civic Excellence would serve the same purpose and have the same effects, commending students for demonstrating high levels of understanding and engagement in civic education.

Once a student receives the Seal of Civic Excellence, they will receive recognition on their diploma, transcript, and at graduation, providing extrinsic motivation for students to prioritize this essential aspect of learning. By offering a tangible symbol of achievement for civics, the Seal of Civic Excellence will encourage students to delve deeper into topics such as government, history, and current events and foster a greater sense of civic awareness and participation.

SB 762 also provides an opportunity and incentive for Maryland schools to increase rates of civic competency, engagement, and education. Schools that achieve a graduating class with 50% or more of students having the Seal of Civic Excellence upon graduation will receive a designation as a Center of Civic Excellence. By providing this recognition to schools, we can

increase civic excellence not only on the single student level, but up to an entire school, city, or county level.

In our rapidly evolving society, it is more important than ever to cultivate a sense of civic responsibility and engagement among our youth. Civic education includes not only the knowledge of governmental processes and structures but also the essential skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication which are all crucial to be an active citizen. By motivating students to take higher-level government and civic courses (therefore priming them to pursue civic-related activities outside of school and civic-related careers) and motivating schools to create remedies and programs to achieve higher student civic achievement and learning, the Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence is a critical step in increasing rates of civic and voter participation among the new generations to come. The effects of this will reverberate in society in the decades to come and will shape our future as a democracy.

Additionally, the establishment of the Seal of Civic Excellence is a clear alignment with Maryland's commitment to educational excellence and civic engagement. By formally recognizing civically excelled and engaged students, we can send a powerful message about the value we place on informed citizenship and civic participation.

In conclusion, I urge you to support Senate Bill 762 and the establishment of the Seal of Civic Excellence in Maryland. Take action to not only honor the achievements of our students but also empower them to become active and engaged members of our democratic society.

Sincerely,
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