

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
SB0008 Education – Maryland Civic Excellence Program – Established
Bill Hearing Date January 29, 2025

Position: Support

January 29, 2025

Dear Honorable Committee Members,

My name is Jiya Patel, and I am a resident of Anne Arundel County. I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 0008, which seeks to establish the **Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence program**.

As a student and advocate a part of the Maryland Civic Education Coalition, I have noticed firsthand the importance of civic education in shaping responsible, informed, and educated citizens. Unfortunately, civic engagement often takes a backseat in our educational system, and this bill offers a critical opportunity to change that.

The Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence will:

- Encourage students to engage more deeply with civic education and activities.
- Highlight the importance of staying critically informed on local, state, and national issues.
- Inspire schools to integrate more civic learning into their curricula.

This civic seal is critical in order to engage youth in community matters, especially those that come from less experience and opportunities. As of 2020, there are 53,000 first-generation and 105,000 second-generation immigrant students in Maryland, who are enrolled in higher education. As schools are inspired to fuse civics with active learning, then students coming from immigrant families, who are not used to civic processes, will be influenced to pursue civic related action at the secondary education level, and continue for their higher education goals.

Many students have family members who are able to connect them to certain foundations that provide civic education and learning. However, a vast amount of students require avenues to engage, whether it's through research and connection building as civic education is provided in schools. This recognition would amplify the voices of the youth for the long-term, allowing a deeper engagement and opportunity to advocate for civic action.

In conclusion, **SB0008** is an investment in the future of Maryland's democracy. By supporting this bill, the committee will help ensure that Maryland's students are empowered to actively contribute to their communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Jiya Patel
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