



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

January 29, 2025

SB 8 Education – Maryland Civic Excellence Program - Established

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

SB 8 is a proposal to initiate the Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence program to recognize students and schools for being civically engaged. This voluntary program would allow local school systems that promote civic readiness and civic engagement of students by granting a seal on graduating high school students' diplomas. Local school systems would NOT be required to participate.

Where did this idea originate? This program was recommended in 2017 by the Civic Architecture Symposium conducted by MSDE as a call to recognize the work being done by students regarding civics. Connecticut, Arizona, California, Georgia, Ohio, New York, Virginia, and Tennessee have developed and implemented similar programs; however, Maryland did not act on the recommendation.

At a minimum, a participating local school system's criterion for a Seal of Civic Excellence must require a student to (1) take the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment for Government and meet the requirements for graduation; (2) earn specified grades in specified high school social studies courses; and (3) complete and demonstrate evidence of student service activities, as specified. A local school system that determines a student has fulfilled the criteria under the program must (1) award the student a Seal of Civic Excellence; (2) record the award on the student's official high school transcript; and (3) recognize the award by awarding a cord or medal or by attaching other insignia on the student's high school diploma.

Additionally, school systems with at least 75% of students in its graduation class who have earned the seal of civic engagement could be designated as a center of civic engagement, and receive a banner, Governor's citation, or citation from MSDE.

At a minimum, a participating local school system's criterion for a Center of Civic Excellence designation must require a public school to have at least 50% of the students in its graduating class who have earned a Seal of Civic Engagement. A local school system that determines that a public school has fulfilled the criteria under the program must (1) designate the school as a Center of Civic Excellence and (2) recognize the designation by providing a banner, Governor's citation, or citation from MSDE.

To recap, SB 8 implements the Civic Architecture Symposium's recommendations from the 2017 task force and allows students to be rewarded and recognized for their civic engagement and knowledge.

I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 8.