



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

January 24, 2025

Dear Honorable Committee Members,

My name is Heather Wyatt-Nichol. I am a resident of Baltimore County—my daughter is a senior in high school. I also work in Baltimore City as an Associate Professor in the College of Public Affairs at the University of Baltimore. 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 parent and professor, I have seen firsthand the importance of civic education in shaping responsible, informed 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 informed on local, state, and national issues.
- Inspire schools to integrate more civic learning into their curricula.

I've taught political science and public administration courses for over two decades (and across three states). On occasion, I met first-year students that were unfamiliar with basic knowledge of American government and the importance of their roles and responsibilities as citizens. In addition, students that are currently enrolled in K-12 have witnessed a political environment rife with division, lacking civility, and the ability to debate policy in the proper manner. It is our job to educate students to be productive citizens in an active democracy.

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,

Heather Wyatt-Nichol
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