

# **SB\_8\_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

Alexander Hossainkhail, *Chair*  
Thomas Evans, *Vice-Chair*  
Folashade Epebinu, *Secretary*

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January 27, 2025

**Re: SB 8** | Education - Maryland Civic Excellence Program - Established

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Energy, Education, and 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 8** 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 8** 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 8** 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 8** not only uplifts individual youth civic engagement but also highlights schools that promote collective civic engagement across Maryland. The Council is in support of **SB 8**, 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 8** 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 8** 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 "Alex Hossainkhail".

Alex Hossainkhail  
Chair, Maryland Youth Advisory Council

# **Christopher Keane Support for SB0008.pdf**

Uploaded by: Christopher Keane

Position: FAV

My name is Christopher Keane, and I am a proud participant in the Innagural Maryland Corps/Service Year Option Program and an active volunteer in civic organizations across our state. I am writing to express my strong support for SB0008, which seeks to establish the Maryland Civic Excellence Program.

Service and civics are fundamental pillars of our society. They must be ingrained in our children to foster a sense of community and civic responsibility. This bill, which has no associated costs, aims to promote civic education and service in Maryland, making our state a leader in civic innovation.

The Maryland Civic Excellence Program will ensure that our high schools promote service and civic involvement. By educating students on America's history, Maryland's history, and the workings of government at all levels, we empower them to be active and informed citizens. This understanding is crucial for the success of our democracy and the well-being of our communities.

I believe that this legislation will lead to a more successful Maryland. When more people understand how the system works, their voices can be heard, and legislators can focus on addressing the needs of their constituents. This starts with our education system, setting a high standard for civic education.

This bill does not dictate specific courses but encourages educators to develop policies that ensure students are well-versed in civics. It promotes involvement and understanding, enabling individuals to reach out to their legislators, commissioners, or representatives when their communities face challenges.

As a young person who has experienced the power of civic engagement, I am dedicated to promoting civic excellence in Maryland. Educating our youth on how to implement change and understand their government is essential for our democracy. It is not about political affiliations; it is about ensuring that every Marylander has a voice and feels included in the system.

SB0008 is the starting point for building a more civically engaged society. I urge you to support this bill and help make Maryland a state of civic innovation and excellence.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely, Christopher Keane

**MD4CS\_MOST\_SB8.pdf**

Uploaded by: Ellie Mitchell

Position: FAV



**Senate Bill 8**  
**Education, Energy, and Environment Committee– January 29, 2025**  
**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 and MD4CS strongly support Senate Bill 8, which represents a common-sense, fiscally neutral approach to encouraging student participation in civics education and providing schools with expanded opportunities to foster civic engagement. For our democracy to thrive, young people must practice citizenship and develop a comprehensive understanding of the systems and processes that enable active civic participation. However, amidst the numerous mandates and requirements students must meet to graduate, civics education often does not receive the attention it deserves within the curriculum.

Recognition programs for students serve multiple purposes: they strengthen applications for post-secondary opportunities and scholarships, provide schools with a platform to showcase their value to families and communities, and, most importantly, contribute to a society enriched by educated, engaged, and informed citizens.

On behalf of MOST and MD4CS, we extend our gratitude to Senator Kagan for sponsoring Senate Bill 8 and respectfully urge the committee to issue a favorable report.

Ellie Mitchell, 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)

**SB0008.HB0072.pdf**

Uploaded by: Gabrielle Moore Brooks

Position: FAV





**SB0008/HB0072**

Education – Maryland Civic Excellence Program – Established

Whereas 9 states have already effectively integrated a civic seals or engagement program into their school systems; and

Whereas, students who experience high-quality civic education are more likely to: complete college, vote, be confident in speaking publicly and communicating with elected representatives, and volunteer and work on community issues<sup>1</sup>; and

Whereas youth civic engagement can lead to increased academic performance and improved social-emotional well-being<sup>2</sup>; and

Whereas this program encourages student participation in government; and

Whereas students will be encouraged to get involved in their school and community; and

Whereas this bill promotes youth literacy in the legislative process; and

Whereas HCRASC supports “Promoting school-based programs and curriculum that encourage civic engagement and participation” (HCRASC Platform Education)

Be it therefore further resolved, HCRASC supports SB0008/HB0072

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<sup>1</sup>“What Is Civics.” *iCivics*, <https://vision.icivics.org/why-civics/>.

<sup>2</sup>“Why Is Youth Civic Engagement Important?” *CIRCLE*, <https://circle.tufts.edu/understanding-youth-civic-engagement/why-it-important>

**Resolution: 24/25- Authored by Gabrielle Moore Brooks, HCRASC Student Legislative Affairs Coordinator**

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HCRASC President

HCRASC Advisor

# **SB0008 Seal of Civic Excellence - MD-CEC Signing L**

Uploaded by: Genie Massey

Position: FAV



## Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

### SB0008 Education – Maryland Civic Excellence Program – Established

**Bill Hearing Date January 29, 2025**

#### **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 SB0008.**





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**MARYLAND**  
HUMANITIES



**MOST NETWORK**  
Leaders in Youth Development

# **2025 Civic Seals Testimony HLWN.pdf**

Uploaded by: Heather Wyatt-Nichol

Position: FAV



**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  
[heatherwyattnichol@gmail.com](mailto:heatherwyattnichol@gmail.com)

**SB 8- SUPP - EEE - Civic Engagement.pdf**

Uploaded by: Henry Bogdan

Position: FAV

**January 29, 2025**

**Testimony on Senate Bill 8**  
**Education - Maryland Civic Excellence Program - Established**  
**Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee**

**Position: Favorable**

Maryland Nonprofits is a statewide association of over 1800 nonprofit organizations and institutions. We urge you to support Senate Bill 8, to recognize and promote the vital role of civic knowledge, skills, and engagement among public school students in Maryland.

Senate Bill 8 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 8 a Favorable Report.



# **2025 Civic Seals Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jessica Mahoney

Position: FAV



**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 Jessica Mahoney, and I am a resident of Montgomery 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 teacher and education advocate, 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.

As an educator my students come alive when they are able to get hands on access to high-quality civic education and I believe full heartily that the civic seal of excellence will ensure that more students across our state will get equitable access to these great opportunities

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,

Jessica Mahoney  
[j.mahoney1124@gmail.com](mailto:j.mahoney1124@gmail.com)  
240-413-6761





## House Ways & Means Committee

### HB0072 Education – Maryland Civic Excellence Program – Established

Bill Hearing Date January 29, 2025

Position: Support

[Date]

Dear Honorable Committee Members,

My name is [Your Name], and I am a resident of [County]. I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 0072, which seeks to establish the **Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence program**.

As [a student/a teacher/a parent/an advocate], 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.

[Include a brief personal story or example that demonstrates the impact of civic engagement and how the program will benefit students and society.]

In conclusion, **HB0072** 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,

[Your Name]

[Your Contact Information]

# **Jiya Patel - Senate Committee Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jiya Patel

Position: FAV

**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  
jiyapatel0509@gmail.com

# Untitled document.pdf

Uploaded by: Joshua Oh

Position: FAV





**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 Joshua Oh, 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, I have seen 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 always loved helping my community. As an elementary schooler, I collected and donated to shelters, but when I asked to volunteer, my age turned me down. My brother and I created a non-profit called Kid Changemakers to get kids involved in service. We've worked for over a decade to benefit our community, and during COVID, we saw the need for diapers. Maryland was one of two states that taxed baby diapers, not adult diapers. We reached out to our state senators, and after rejection, Senator Elfreth believed in us. We lobbied and testified to get SB316 passed, saving 12 million dollars a year for families. It shows us that despite your age, you can make a difference. This program can give students chances to shine and make change when, in the classroom, civics is overshadowed. Students should be awarded for their efforts to help those in their community.

**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 contribute to their communities actively.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Joshua Oh  
Kidchangemaker@gmail.com

# **SBCivicExcellenceProgram.pdf**

Uploaded by: Justin Ready

Position: FAV



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.

# **Kinsley's 2025 Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence.p**

Uploaded by: Kinsley Potts

Position: FAV



## 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 Kinsley Potts, and I am a resident of Baltimore 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 tenth-grade student at Garrison Forest School, I've seen firsthand how vital civic education is in developing responsible, informed citizens. Unfortunately, civic engagement often gets overlooked in our education system, and this bill presents a crucial opportunity to change that. Establishing the Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence program opens the door for more youth involvement in Civics and recognition of the youth tirelessly working to serve and impact their communities.

The Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence will:

- **Encourage** students to engage more deeply with **civic education and activities**.
- Help students **gain and apply leadership and collaborative skills**.
- Highlight the importance of **staying up to date** on current local, state, and national issues.
- Inspire schools to **integrate more civic learning** into their curricula.

Personally, Civic engagement has affected my life in a meaningful and fulfilling way by teaching skills of collaboration and responsibility and further developing my morals of compassion, selflessness and empathy. My first service event I planned on my own was a free community painting and backpack giveaway event, where I gave away 50 backpacks full of school supplies. Seeing the impact I could make in my community, even with a small event, was heart-warming and has inspired me to want and feel the need to serve. Over time, that need has grown exponentially. I am forever grateful for civic engagement, which has sparked my passion and helped me recognize the importance of uplifting and helping those around me. I started participating in leadership opportunities at school, like becoming an ambassador. It led me to encourage my friends to participate to feel the same sense of purpose and see the impact ANYONE can make in their community. Civic engagement sparked a drive in me to make the world a better place day by day that I wouldn't have had without civics.

It drove me to the place I am today, writing a testimony in support of a bill that will positively affect the future politicians, lawmakers, and leaders of tomorrow. The Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence will raise the numbers of youth involved in Civics and prepare them to be morally sound citizens and future leaders dedicated to making Maryland a place we are proud to call home. It will also let us confidently say that the people we are handing our positions of leadership to are equipped to uphold the laws and morals of our country honorably.

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 contribute to their communities actively. I respectfully urge the support of this bill to inspire and empower students and future leaders who will be seated in your chairs and making decisions across Maryland to make a difference in their communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

**Kinsley Potts**

Phone number: 443-379-7545

Email: [Kinsleypotts02@gmail.com](mailto:Kinsleypotts02@gmail.com)





## House Ways & Means Committee

### HB0072 Education – Maryland Civic Excellence Program – Established

Bill Hearing Date January 29, 2025

Position: Support

[Date]

Dear Honorable Committee Members,

My name is [Your Name], and I am a resident of [County]. I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 0072, which seeks to establish the **Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence program**.

As [a student/a teacher/a parent/an advocate], 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.

[Include a brief personal story or example that demonstrates the impact of civic engagement and how the program will benefit students and society.]

In conclusion, **HB0072** 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,

[Your Name]

[Your Contact Information]

**SB8\_MSEA\_Lamb\_FAV.pdf**

Uploaded by: Lauren Lamb

Position: FAV

**FAVORABLE**  
**Senate Bill 8**  
**Education - Maryland Civic Excellence Program - Established**

**Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment**  
**January 29, 2025**

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

The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 8, 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 8.**

# **testimony for SB0008 - FAV - Lena Morreale Scott 1**

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 0008 – Education – Maryland Civic Excellence Program – Established**  
January 27, 2025

**Favorable Report (FAV)**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts on Senate Bill 0008, which seeks to establish the Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence program. 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 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 a curriculum and professional development specialist in a Maryland-based nonprofit civic education organization, and 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 the College of Education 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 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. SB0008 will strengthen democracy through civic 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 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 initiatives led 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 SB0008 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.

Looking ahead, I hope the University of Maryland together with our many partners in the Maryland Civic Education Coalition and the Maryland State Department of Education, will be able to support district leaders in developing and implementing their programs in ways that are measurable, impactful, and equitable. As the program matures, we hope to partner with others to provide school leaders with 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 in the program. 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 0008. I appreciate your leadership, as well as the leadership of Delegate Vogel and Senators Kagan and Ready, on this bipartisan bill. 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  
[LScott12@umd.edu](mailto:LScott12@umd.edu)

# **1-29 SB 8 Education – Maryland Civic Excellence Pr**

Uploaded by: Lois Hybl

Position: FAV



**TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

**SB 8 Education – Maryland Civic Excellence Program – Established**

**Position: Favorable**

**By: Linda T. Kohn, President**

**Date: January 29, 2025**

The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) believes in representative government and in the individual liberties established in the Constitutions of the United States and of Maryland. Sustaining our democratic form of government depends upon civic education as a key component of the democratic process.

**SB 8 - Education – Maryland Civic Excellence Program – Established** would empower local education agencies to establish a seal of civic engagement and a recognition program for schools which have a high participation rate among graduating seniors. We support SB 8 to incentivize students to invest more time and effort in civic education and service learning and elevate the overall value of civics in Maryland's public schools.

Civic education occurs in many settings beyond the school day, such as in sports, volunteer organizations, houses of worship, political rallies and campaigns, and at the polling place on Election Day. We support opportunities for students to put learning into practice such as in service-learning experiences, extra-curricular activities, school and community engagement, and opportunities to participate in school governance. We support strengthening service and volunteer opportunities as a pathway to stronger communities, improved mental health, improved academic outcomes, and a healthier democracy as individuals work in groups to solve issues they care about.

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 will serve as a concrete signal to colleges and employers that they will engage productively as members of the community.

LWVMD urges a favorable report on SB 8.



# Written Testimony #0008.pdf

Uploaded by: Makenzie Johnson

Position: FAV

January 27, 2025

Dear Honorable Committee Members,

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

Civic education plays a crucial role in empowering citizens to engage responsibly and knowledgeably in their communities. Unfortunately, civic engagement is often deprioritized in our educational curriculum. This bill presents a vital opportunity to enhance civic education within our schools.

The Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence will:

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

Civic engagement fosters equality and fairness, contributing significantly to the future of our society. The implementation of this program aims to improve educational opportunities not just for college students, but also for high school students, promoting inclusion and equity. It will inspire high schoolers to explore governmental pathways while they consider their future careers.

During the summer, as I prepared for my senior year, I had the opportunity to join the Maryland Civic Engagement Coalition (MDCEC). Through this experience, I learned about the challenges and initiatives impacting education in Maryland. This exposure opened my eyes to aspects of our history and civic life that I wasn't previously aware of. Participating in these opportunities has empowered me and my peers to contribute positively to the educational landscape.

In conclusion, supporting Senate Bill 0008 represents an investment in the future of Maryland's democracy. By endorsing this bill, the committee will help empower students to make meaningful contributions to their communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Makenzie Johnson

Contact Information - makenziej336@gmail.com

**senate civic seal testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Maria Garza-Holguin

Position: FAV

## 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 Maria Garza-Holguin, a senior at North County High School, member of Maryland Civic Education Coalition Youth Advisory Council, and 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, I have witnessed firsthand the importance of civic education in shaping responsible, informed citizens. Despite this, civic engagement is not perceived rightfully in the educational system, but this bill permits an opportunity to transcend and uplift the value of civics.

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.

With my experience of moving to multiple states, I have deeply acknowledged the interrelationship between active participation and bridging diverse communities. From my experience, I assure myself, alongside many others, foster their identity and find a sense of belonging and purpose through civics. Thus, this program will ensure youth to expatiate the duties bestowed upon our democracy, while simultaneously cultivating future generations to lead through individual responsibility and global awareness. I find it crucial that youth, as a representation of our future, have this program that ensures an informative and resilient society.

Ultimately, **SB008** 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,  
Maria Garza-Holguin  
Anne Arundel County

# **SB 8 DSCI Favorable Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Meghan Music

Position: FAV

WES MOORE, Governor  
ARUNA MILLER, Lieutenant Governor  
PAUL MONTEIRO, Secretary  
SARAH FLAMMANG, Deputy Secretary



January 29, 2025

The Honorable Brian Feldman  
Chair, Education, Energy, and Environment Committee  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

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

The Department of Service and Civic Innovation respectfully requests a favorable report on Senate Bill 8 Education - Maryland Civic Excellence Program - Established.

SB 8, the Maryland Excellence Program, would provide a vital framework for recognizing and promoting civic education in our public schools. By establishing a voluntary program encouraging participation, SB 8 empowers local school systems to prioritize civic education and engagement initiatives tailored to their unique communities.

The Department acknowledges that service is a nonpartisan strategy that helps bring people together across lines of difference. By promoting these values to young people, they can develop and incorporate them into their personal and professional lives as they grow into future community leaders. HB 72 creates a tangible incentive for students and schools to actively engage in civic learning and service by awarding the Seal of Civic Excellence to qualifying students and naming exemplary schools as Centers of Civic Excellence.

In addition, the criteria outlined in SB 8 ensure that program participation is meaningful and impactful. From requiring students to demonstrate proficiency in key social studies courses to engaging in service learning projects focused on community and civic engagement, the program sets high standards that will undoubtedly contribute to developing informed, engaged citizens.

The Department of Service and Civic Innovation respectfully requests a favorable report on SB 8 and its vision for advancing civic education and engagement in Maryland. By investing in our students and empowering our schools to prioritize civic learning, we are laying the foundation for young Marylanders to contribute positively to their communities.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Meghan Music, Legislative Civic Innovation Specialist.

Yours in Service,

Paul Monteiro

Secretary, Maryland Department of Service and Civic Innovation



# **Testimony in support of SB0008 - Education - Maryl**

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

01/29/2025

Richard Keith Kaplowitz  
Frederick, MD 21703

**TESTIMONY ON SB#/0008- POSITION: FAVORABLE**

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

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

**FROM:** Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#/0008, **Education - Maryland Civic Excellence Program – Established**

If Maryland schools are to prepare students for the future as engaged citizens school's systems should promote and reward the students who have acquired and applied knowledge of civics. Students must be encouraged to learn that freedom also means responsibility and guided to recognize and make those citizen responsibilities a part of their future.

This bill promotes that goal by 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. A specific reward program should be created to acknowledge the accomplishment through establishing minimum criteria for the award of a Seal of Civic Excellence and designation as a Center of Civic Excellence. Data should be collected to evaluate the effectiveness of this program in reaching designated goals through requiring participating local school systems to submit an annual report to the Department of Education.

If the youth is the future then everything we can do to help them make that future with the knowledge and tools they need can secure that future for them and our counties, state, and nation.

**I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#/0008.**



**Roselyn Bi Testimony Civic Seals Bill SB0008.pdf**

Uploaded by: Roselyn Bi

Position: FAV



## **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 Roselyn Bi, and I am a resident of Howard 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, 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.

Working with new immigrant youths through a Culture Sharing Camp, I not only discovered my passion in serving other youths, especially those of vulnerable communities, but I also realized the importance of developing a welcoming community centered around service and supporting one another. The Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence will encourage students to find their interests and develop a sense of social responsibility.

Inspiring youth, the future of our tomorrow, to actively engage with others and their community establishes a strong foundation for our democracy and builds a thriving community in Maryland and beyond.

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,

Roselyn Bi

[4roselynbi@gmail.com](mailto:4roselynbi@gmail.com)

# **Testimony - Civic Excellence 2025.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sen. Cheryl Kagan

Position: FAV

CHERYL C. KAGAN  
Legislative District 17  
Montgomery County



Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Suite 2 West  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
301-858-3134 · 410-841-3134  
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Cheryl.Kagan@senate.state.md.us

Vice Chair  
Education, Energy, and  
the Environment Committee

Joint Audit and Evaluation Committee  
Joint Committee on Federal Relations

## THE SENATE OF MARYLAND ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

### **SB8: Maryland Civic Excellence Program**

Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
Wednesday, January 29, 2025 1:00 PM

Our democracy depends on the next generation's engagement in civic affairs. 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. According to the Fordham Institute, Maryland's civics curriculum is strong but has room for improvement.

The bipartisan [SB8](#) 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 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.

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

Both the 2023-- introduced by Senator Ready-- and the 2024 versions of this bill passed the Senate unanimously.

**I urge a favorable report on SB8.**

**2025 Civic Seals Testimony- SB0008 Education.pdf**

Uploaded by: Sharon Green

Position: FAV



**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 Sharon Green, and I am a resident of Baltimore 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 an educator and a parent of middle and high school students 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.

Working in Maryland as a Social Studies Department Chair and social studies teacher for many years, I am all too familiar with how hard it is to convince even the most well-intentioned and dedicated school administrations to make civic learning a formal part of the school curriculum. With such a huge focus on literacy and math test scores, there just isn't the incentive to carve out the time in student schedules given that civic learning is not tested and therefore not asked about by most parents. However, I would argue that it IS tested every day of our lives and is the most important content schools can bring to their students. We all live in this country and are responsible for maintaining this democracy. We adults must pass on the knowledge of how our government works and how citizens contribute to maintain it if we have any hope that future generations will have the tools to engage, participate, stay informed, and get involved in supporting issues that affect them. Establishing the MD Civic Excellence Program will create exactly the incentive that many school administrators need to make this important subject a priority. Whether schools create a civics course, a civics club, or integrate civic learning throughout other social studies courses the result will be a net positive for our students and our country.

Additionally, it should be noted that it is well established that social studies instruction IS literacy instruction and that reading content-specific material grows students' background knowledge, a critical

component of comprehension, as well as allows for opportunities to practice specific reading and writing skills that there isn't always time for in a typical English class as those are often dominated by novel studies and grammar lessons. This bill promotes carving out dedicated time for focusing on these important literacy skills.

Finally, in 2025 is there a more important skill to teach children than how to have civic discourse and purposefully engage with ideas about our country that may be different than our own? If we expect our children to take the reins one day, then knowledge in both the content of civics education as well as the processes are critical. In my 20 years in the education field, I don't think there could be anything with more obvious value than increasing access to civic education in schools, and I hope you feel the same way. The future of Maryland and the future of our democracy depends on your vote to pass this bill.

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,

Sharon Green  
7902 Ivy Ln  
Pikesville, MD 21208  
[shgreen@gmail.com](mailto:shgreen@gmail.com)  
732-266-5427

# **SB 8 WCASC Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Shradha Bista

Position: FAV





January 27, 2025

**Re: SB 8 | Education - Maryland Civic Excellence Program - Established**

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

The Washington County Association of Student Councils (WCASC) is a coalition of high school and middle school student councils dedicated to amplifying the voices of thousands of students within Washington County Public Schools. WCASC strives to create connections among those within the community, providing students access to avenues in which they can become more civically involved at the local level. The mission of WCASC is to elevate the collective student voice by building communities of student leaders, giving students agency to speak their truth, and inspiring students to take action.

WCASC is in support of **SB 8 – Maryland Civic Excellence Program** – and urges the Ways and Means Committee to give a favorable report on this bill.

**SB 8** addresses the concern of political education and civic literacy by establishing programs for high school students to foster civic engagement in school. A study by the U.S Chamber of Commerce Foundation revealed that over 70% of Americans fail a basic civic literacy quiz, struggling with fundamental topics such as the three branches of government<sup>1</sup>. This demonstrates the urgent need for civic education. **SB 8** provides students with a strong foundation in civic knowledge from an early age, establishing the Maryland Civic Excellence Program to incentivize students to foster crucial civic readiness by awarding them with a “Seal of Civic Excellence”. This seal, displayed on their transcript and diploma, serves to encourage civic participation and education. The skills students develop while working towards this recognition can prepare them to make informed decisions as voters and deepen their understanding of the laws and policies that shape their communities and futures. This program has the potential to foster a generation of civically engaged citizens.

**SB 8** hopes to establish recognition programs for schools of civic excellence, mirroring established programs in Maryland regarding safety, environment, and language excellence. Across the country, students with schools that have recognition for bi-literate students in the form of a Seal of Biliteracy have proven to enroll and excel in a 4-year college at higher rates<sup>2</sup>. This same reality can be true for students in Maryland with the Seal of Civic Excellence with the passing of **SB 8**, leading to schools that promote this success for Maryland youth. **SB 8** will support schools in uplifting civic engagement opportunities for students, and establish a Center of Civic Excellence to be used as a resource for promoting civic education across Maryland. The promotion of a Seal of Civic Excellence ensures that students will receive instruction in civics and government, in order to provide the necessary skills needed as informed citizens.

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<sup>1</sup> Staff, U.S. Chamber. “New Study Finds Alarming Lack of Civic Literacy among Americans.” *U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation*, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, 25 June 2024,

[www.uschamberfoundation.org/civics/new-study-finds-alarming-lack-of-civic-literacy-among-americans](https://www.uschamberfoundation.org/civics/new-study-finds-alarming-lack-of-civic-literacy-among-americans). Accessed 21 Jan. 2025.

<sup>2</sup> Najarro, Ileana. “Which Students Are Earning the Seal of Biliteracy, in Charts.” *Education Week*, Education Week, 18 Dec. 2024, [www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/which-students-are-earning-the-seal-of-biliteracy-in-charts/2024/12](https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/which-students-are-earning-the-seal-of-biliteracy-in-charts/2024/12). Accessed 26 Jan. 2025.

**SB 8** aligns with WCASC's Platform to empower students as active, informed citizens. As an organization, the Washington County Association of Student Councils strongly supports:

1. "School-based programs and related activities that encourage civic participation," (WCASC Legislative Platform, Plank II; B, 4), and
2. "The individual ability of students should be recognized, developed, and utilized in order to nurture effective leaders," (WCASC Legislative Platform, Plank I; A, 1).

**SB 8**'s establishment of the Maryland Civic Excellence Program is a critical step toward encouraging and recognizing civic engagement across Maryland schools and students. Maryland must grow citizens and community leaders in the classroom, engaging all students in political education and civic engagement. For these reasons, WCASC strongly supports **SB 8** and respectfully requests a favorable report from the committee. We thank you for considering this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barna Begzad". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Barna Begzad  
President, Washington County Association of Student Councils

# 2025 civic seal.pdf

Uploaded by: Virginia Nichol

Position: FAV



**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 Virginia Nichol, and I am a resident of Baltimore 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, 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 went to the 4th Annual Maryland Civic Education and Engagement Leadership Summit, it was the first time I ever really joined in on civics. It shined a light on a perspective I never really thought about before. I watched the news with my family, but I never really thought about the big picture of how issues outside of my county or Maryland could impact me until I went to the summit.

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,

Virginia Nichol  
[l0nelymang0@icloud.com](mailto:l0nelymang0@icloud.com)  
443-518-9618





## House Ways & Means Committee

### HB0072 Education – Maryland Civic Excellence Program – Established

Bill Hearing Date January 29, 2025

Position: Support

[Date]

Dear Honorable Committee Members,

My name is [Your Name], and I am a resident of [County]. I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 0072, which seeks to establish the **Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence program**.

As [a student/a teacher/a parent/an advocate], 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.

[Include a brief personal story or example that demonstrates the impact of civic engagement and how the program will benefit students and society.]

In conclusion, **HB0072** 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,

[Your Name]

[Your Contact Information]

## **Will Androne, Civic Seal Bill Testimony (Senate).**

Uploaded by: William Androne

Position: FAV

Good Afternoon, Honorable Committee Members,

My name is Will Andrione. I am a junior at Severna Park High School in Anne Arundel County and am here today to support Senate Bill 0008. A bill that will:

- Allow students to engage in civic activities as well as education more deeply
- Highlight the importance of and encourage staying informed on policy and issues on the local, state, and national level
- Create a standard for schools to incorporate more civic education for their students

As the Civic Engagement Coordinator for CRASC, Anne Arundel County's' county-wide student government, and a Local Policy Director for the American Youth Association, I see firsthand the importance of civics in shaping an engaged and active youth. However, I also see how much we lack in youth civic engagement.

By offering extrinsic incentives, that being the 'Seal of Civic Excellence,' this bill will encourage students to explore civics and service, often sparking a lifelong passion for community engagement.

I know this first hand; my first step into civics was with the 2024 Primary elections as an election judge, with my extrinsic motivation being the judges' paycheck. Learning about the candidates and meeting and connecting with individuals already enshrined in civic engagement made something click with me. That extrinsic motivation turned into a passion. I am passionate about civics, engaging my community, and staying informed in local, state, and national politics.



I have seen that this motivation turned passion is not an isolated situation. When we give students and youth a reason to want to start engaging in civics, we have seen and will continue to see students deepen their involvement.

If you want to create a new generation of leaders and students to engage in their communities, it starts with Senate Bill 08. A vote for Senate Bill 08 is a vote to empower our students, inspire civics in schools... and invest in the future leaders of our community, state... and nation.

Thank you for your time.

# **SB 8 - 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) 0008- Education - Maryland Civic Excellence Program - Established  
**DATE:** January 29, 2025  
**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 0008. 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 agencies (LEAs) and schools that chooses to participate, and it will grant well-deserved recognition to students who are awarded with the Seal of Civic Excellence.

SB 0008 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 0008. Please contact Dr. Akilah Alleyne, Executive Director of Government Affairs 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.

# Senate Civic Seals Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Zander Hine

Position: FAV



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

### **SB0008 Education – Maryland Civic Excellence Program – Established**

**Bill Hearing Date January 29, 2025**

**Position: Support**

January 26, 2025

Dear Honorable Committee Members,

My name is Zander Hine, and I am a resident of Washington 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 high school student, I have seen firsthand the benefit that civic education has in shaping responsible, informed citizens. Civic education and engagement can take a student - who isn't quite sure how they fit into society - and empower them to get involved and feel fulfilled. 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.

In my community, I have been serving with multiple nonprofit organizations since 8th grade. It was around this time when I first volunteered with the local chapter of Sleep in Heavenly Peace, a nationwide organization that builds free beds for those in need. I was doing my first bed delivery with the organization, going to clients' houses and delivering the beds and assembling them. In one house that my team delivered to, there was a family of five, all sleeping on the same mattress on the floor. We made a bunk bed and a twin bed for two girls and a boy respectively. After we had finished building the bed, the boy started jumping up and down on his bed, seemingly more excited than his sisters. His parents told us that it was his birthday that day, and for his fifth birthday, he received a bed! Just seeing the joy on that little boy's face and being able to be a part of what caused that joy was one of the most moving experiences of my life.

This experience pushed me to serve more, because I now knew that I could make a direct impact in the lives of the less fortunate in my community. Experiences like this not only made me feel good, but I could tell I was genuinely helping these people. Senate Bill 0008 can incentivize other students to

work in their community and be moved and changed like I was. After students experience something like that, they will be hooked and on track to become a civically engaged citizen for life.

In conclusion, **SB0008** is an investment in the future of Maryland's democracy - it is an investment in the future. 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,

Zander Hine  
[zanderhine@icloud.com](mailto:zanderhine@icloud.com)