



**House of Delegates Ways & Means Committee**  
**SB8 Education – Maryland Civic Excellence Program – Established**  
**Bill Hearing Date: March 19, 2025**  
**Position: Support**

Dear Honorable Committee Members,

My name is Heather Wyatt-Nichol, and I am a resident of Baltimore County. I am writing to express my strong support for SB8/HB72, which seeks to establish the Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence program.

As 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 has widespread support from diverse stakeholders, including students, educators, civic organizations, and state education leaders. It is also part of a growing national movement—many states have already adopted similar cost-effective initiatives to strengthen civic education and encourage youth engagement.

The Seal of Civic Excellence will:

- Encourage students to engage more deeply in civic education, leadership, and service.
- Highlight the importance of staying informed on local, state, and national issues.
- Inspire schools to integrate more civics into their curricula and recognize student achievement.

I've taught political science and public administration for over 25 years, across three states. As an educator who values the importance of civic engagement and recognizes the need for increased opportunities for civic engagement for students, I believe that the establishment of the Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence program represents a significant advancement. This program has the potential to revitalize civic education and inspire students to play an active role in shaping our democracy. By fostering a sense of empowerment, inclusivity, community connection, and responsibility among students, civic engagement can contribute to a more positive school climate where students feel valued, engaged, and motivated to make a difference. We have witnessed the negative impact of hateful political rhetoric on our democratic processes at the federal level, and across states in recent years. We must educate the next generation of leaders to do better in sharing different points of view on important policy topics, respecting one another as fellow citizens, facilitating community engagement, and restoring faith in our government.

In conclusion, SB8/HB72 is a smart, cost-effective investment in the future of Maryland's democracy. It has bipartisan support, no additional cost to the state, and a proven track record of success in other states. By supporting this bill, the committee will help ensure that Maryland students are recognized for their civic leadership and prepared to actively contribute to their communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Heather Wyatt-Nichol

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