



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB 72: Education - Maryland Civic Excellence Program - Established

Ways and Means Committee

Wednesday, January 29, 2025 - 1:00PM

Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

Our democracy's longevity depends on the education and civic involvement of future generations. When the youngest Marylanders have the resources and incentives to become civically involved, they become lifelong participants in our democracy. This engagement offers undeniable benefits and perspective to our communities and state. According to the Fordham Institute, Maryland's civics curriculum is strong but has room for improvement.

HB 72 establishes the Maryland Civic Excellence Program, a recognition initiative for students and public schools that promote civic readiness and engagement among students. This recognition is earned for students at graduation by meeting the following requirements:

- Taking the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment for Government;
- Meeting the assessment requirements for graduation and earning an A or B in United States History, Modern World History, and American Government; and
- Completing 75 hours of student service, with at least 30 hours dedicated to a service-learning project focused on community and civic engagement.

Participating school systems must ensure that at least 50% of the graduating class earns the Seal of Civic Excellence. This benefits both the individual student, by fostering civic readiness, and the school system, by promoting a culture of civic engagement. Students who earn the Seal of Civic Excellence will have this recognition noted on their official high school transcript and will wear an insignia, such as a cord or medal, at graduation. Schools meeting the 50% participation requirement will be designated as a "Center of Civic Excellence" and recognized with a banner, a Governor's citation, or a citation from the Maryland State Department of Education.

Establishing the Maryland Civic Excellence Program represents a significant step forward in ensuring the practical application of civic education beyond the classroom. This program will prepare Maryland's public school students to confidently practice civic duties, such as voting, and engage effectively with our political system at all levels, a goal we can all agree offers undeniable benefits to our local communities.

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 follow in their footsteps and reward future generations for their involvement in our democracy and local communities.

This legislation has the support of the Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland State Board of Education, League of Women Voters, Maryland Civic Education Coalition, Maryland Nonprofits, Indivisible, and the Department of Service and Civic Innovation.

I urge the Committee to give a favorable report on HB 72.