



House Ways & Means Committee

HB0072 Education – Maryland Civic Excellence Program – Established

Bill Hearing Date January 29, 2025

Position: Support

January 26, 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 House Bill 0072, 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, **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,

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