

HB0072 Testimony

Education - Maryland Civic Excellence Program - Established

Maryland Association of Student Councils

Mara Babb - State Legislative Affairs Coordinator

Good Afternoon Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and members of the Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Mara Babb and I am a student from Anne Arundel County. I also serve as a State Legislative Affairs Coordinator for the Maryland Association of Student Councils (MASC). On behalf of MASC, I request a favorable report on HB72.

The Maryland Association of Student Councils (MASC) is a youth-led organization composed of secondary school student councils all across the state advocating for the best interest of Maryland students. We have passed a resolution in favor of this bill, voted on by a delegation of MASC's elected and appointed officials, regional student government presidents, and student members of boards of education across the state. Additionally, MASC has exhibited unanimous support of the Maryland Civic Excellence Program during the 2024 Legislative Session and MASC's statewide Convention Conference.

MASC calls on the General Assembly to support the education and promotion of civic engagement and civic literacy by passing HB72. The Civic Excellence Program would recognize exemplary students who commit to social studies, civics, and service. As a student leadership and advocacy organization, MASC supports "School-based programs and related activities that encourage civic participation." (3, J) This bill would directly encourage civic participation by rewarding outstanding students who succeed in social studies classes and complete a civic project, such as a voter registration drive or educational campaign.

As a State Legislative Affairs Coordinator for MASC, I have hosted many civics-related events and seen the positive impact that they have on educating young people about our legislature and voting rights. MASC serves as an outlet for student leadership, civil discourse, and youth empowerment. The Civic Excellence Program will uplift organizations like MASC to promote civic opportunities for young people. Not to mention, civic readiness is vital for students to learn about their own local government, which will empower students to uplift their communities.

Accordingly, MASC respectfully requests a favorable report on HB72 from the committee. Thank you.