



March 19, 2025

Legislative Position: Favorable

Senate Bill 8

Education - Maryland Civic Excellence Program - Established

House Ways and Means Committee

Dear Chair Atterbeary and members of the committee:

Founded in 1969, the Howard Chamber of Commerce is dedicated to helping businesses—from sole proprietors to large international firms—grow and succeed. With the power of 700 members that encompass more than 170,000 employees, the Howard County Chamber is an effective partner with elected officials and advocates for the interests of the county’s business community.

Senate Bill 8 would create a “Maryland Civic Excellence Program,” a student and school recognition program for the purpose of promoting student civic engagement. Students at participating schools would have the opportunity to earn a Seal of Civic Excellence for succeeding in certain civics courses, and completing at least 35 student service-learning hours on tasks or projects with a focus on community engagement. Participating schools can earn a “Center of Civic Excellence” designation if at least 50% of its students have earned the seal.

The Maryland Civic Excellence Program as proposed would add depth to a student’s educational experience and strengthen ties to their communities. By incentivizing real-world civic experience as a part of their student-service learning requirement, students would be able to make connections and discover opportunities locally that they may have never otherwise realized. Additionally, the local engagement opportunity would increase a student’s understanding of the issues impacting their communities, allowing them to be more informed and empowered to make change. By requiring the successful completion of civics courses including US History, Modern World History, and American Government, this program would contribute to ensuring that students graduate high school with the contextual knowledge necessary to excel in college, and become leaders in both the private and public sectors.

Senate Bill 8 would empower students to become knowledgeable and active members of society. This program, by promoting local engagement, may contribute to our best and brightest choosing to stay in the State and continue the work they discovered in the Maryland Civic Excellence Program. For these reasons, the Howard County Chamber of Commerce respectfully **requests a favorable report on SB 8.**

Sincerely,

Kristi Simon

President & CEO

Howard County Chamber of Commerce