



TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

SB 204 Education – Maryland Civic Excellence Program – Established

Position: Favorable with Amendments

By: Linda T. Kohn, President

Date: March 25, 2026

The League of Women Voters of Maryland (LWVMD) believes in representative government and in the individual liberties established in the Constitutions of the United States and of Maryland. Sustaining our democratic form of government depends upon civic education as a key component of the democratic process.

SB 204 Education – Maryland Civic Excellence Program – Established would empower local education agencies to establish a seal of civic engagement to recognize students who demonstrate responsibility, initiative, and devotion to their communities through meaningful civic engagement. We support SB 204 to incentivize students to invest more time and effort in civic education and service learning and elevate the overall value of civics in Maryland’s public schools. We also support adding the amendment to HB 57 supported by House Ways and Means Committee. It requires a student receiving the award to “complete a capstone project through an extracurricular activity that is focused on civic service in Maryland, State, county, or local government.”

Civic education occurs in many settings beyond the school day, such as in sports, volunteer organizations, houses of worship, political rallies and campaigns, and at the polling place on Election Day. We support opportunities for students to put learning into practice such as in service-learning experiences, extra-curricular activities, school and community engagement, and opportunities to participate in school governance. We support strengthening service and volunteer opportunities as a pathway to stronger communities, improved mental health, improved academic outcomes, and a healthier democracy as individuals work in groups to solve issues they care about.

Ensuring the future of our democratic republic is dependent on fostering civic knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions. Maryland students who excel academically in social studies and exceed expectations in volunteer and service-learning should be recognized for their achievements. This recognition will serve as a concrete signal to colleges and employers that they will engage productively as members of the community.

The League and its 2,000 members urge the committee to give a favorable report on SB 204 with amendments.