

FAVORABLE
Senate Bill 204
Public Schools - Maryland Civic Excellence Program - Established

House Ways & Means
March 25, 2026

Lauren Lamb
Government Relations

The Maryland State Education Association supports Senate Bill 204, which would establish the Maryland Civic Excellence Program and authorize a local school system to participate to recognize students who demonstrate excellence in civics and civic literacy. It would also require the State Board of Education to develop guidelines to assist participating local school systems.

MSEA represents 76,000 educators and school employees who work in Maryland's public schools, teaching and preparing our almost 900,000 students so they can pursue their dreams. MSEA also represents 44 local affiliates in every county across the state of Maryland, and our parent affiliate is the 3-million-member National Education Association (NEA).

We support this bill's aim of increasing civic engagement among young people. The program described in this bill creates an incentive for schools and students to excel in civic literacy, and we applaud efforts to encourage students to register to vote, advocate on issues they care about, and strive for academic achievement in social studies, government, and civics coursework.

We want to highlight several crucial considerations for implementing this program. Program requirements should not increase students' standardized testing burden, and the program must be implemented in a manner that does not create unpaid obligations for educators, straining their workload. We also encourage greater equity of access to civic-minded extracurricular activities and support efforts to ensure diverse and holistic social studies and civics education for all students.

We urge the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 204.