

March 23, 2026

To the Honorable Members of the Maryland House Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Samantha Fowler, and I live in Montgomery County. I am here to express my strong support for Senate Bill 0204, which aims to establish the Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence program.

As a teacher, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of civic education. Civic knowledge and engagement are crucial for the health of our democracy and the development of responsible, informed citizens. However, these areas often receive insufficient emphasis in our educational system.

The Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence program represents a vital step forward. By formally recognizing students who excel in their understanding and participation in civic life, we can:

- Motivate students to engage more deeply with civic education and activities.
- Highlight the importance of being informed about local, state, and national issues.
- Encourage schools to prioritize civic learning in their curricula.

I have facilitated meaningful civic education programs, such as Project Citizen and We the People, in my classroom. I have witnessed how civic engagement not only makes political concepts more accessible to students, but also encourages them to be active in civic life in their community. I have had several students who were inspired to do their own policy research projects or intern with local officials because of powerful civic opportunities at my school. The Seal of Civic Excellence will encourage even more students to understand issues in their local communities and how to approach these issues considering multiple perspectives and in a nonpartisan way.

Currently, too few students see civic engagement recognized as a core part of educational success. A graduation seal would signal that Maryland values service, participation, and leadership alongside academic achievement and career preparation.

This is an especially meaningful moment to establish the Seal as we approach the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Honoring students who actively live out the principles of responsibility, self-government, and commitment to the common good helps ensure that the next generation is prepared to sustain our democratic republic.

Please report favorably on SB 0204. Thank you for your time and support of civic education!

Sincerely,
Samantha Fowler