

House Ways and Means Committee

SB 204 Education – Maryland Civic Excellence Program – Established

Bill Hearing Date March 25th, 2026

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and Honorable Committee Members,

My name is Benjamin H. Grimaldi, and I am a 9th grader at the Baltimore Polytechnic Institute. I also serve as the Legislative Affairs Director for the Associated Student Congress of Baltimore City. I support the Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence because students who do meaningful civics projects deserve to be recognized for the time, effort, and leadership they put into improving their communities.

In my own experience, civic learning is most powerful when students are trusted with real responsibility. A valuable leadership experience I had was chairing the ASCBC Elections Committee, where I was able to observe how student government elections happen, and ensure that every voter and candidate had their voice heard. Through this experience, I learned how to effectively problem solve through dealing with election complaints and evaluating the fairest way to respond.

Many students care deeply about their communities but do not see clear pathways that connect civic engagement to school success or graduation. A Seal of Civic Excellence would help change that by showing students that service, participation, and leadership are valued and worth pursuing. A graduation seal matters because it shows that civic engagement is just as important as academic achievement, athletics, or career readiness.

This is the right time to create the Seal of Civic Excellence as we approach the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. Honoring students who live out those ideals today helps ensure that the next generation is ready to carry our democratic republic forward.

Thank you for considering my testimony,

Benjamin H. Grimaldi

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