

Isabel Cabrera - 2311 Storm Cat Ct Eldersburg Maryland

House Ways & Means Committee

HB 57 Education – Maryland Civic Excellence Program – Established

Bill Hearing Date January 29, 2026

Position: Favorable

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

My name is Isabel Cabrera and I am a senior at Liberty High School in Carroll County. I support the Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence because students who are interested in civics and conduct meaningful civics projects deserve to be recognized for their time, effort, and leadership they put into improving their communities and their circumstances.

Within my own experiences, civic learning is at its best when students are granted the trust with responsibilities within civics. Through the Maryland State Civics Program under Deputy Secretary of State Michael Lore, I was able to conduct my own personal research project titled “Stories of the Margins.” Through this experience, I learned through my documentation of 35+ stories of residents within my community how narrative analysis can make for convincing data and real testimony when taken from various subgroups. It’s not just numbers that determine what a problem is, but also the personal stories behind them from constituents that shape the reasons why important legislation is created.

Many students care deeply about their communities but do not see clear pathways that connect civic engagement to school success or graduation. I am one of those same students in my early journey through civics. A Seal of Civic Excellence would help change that by showing students that service, participation, and leadership are valued and truly worth pursuing within their early years of school. 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 and seek out opportunity helps ensure that the next generation is ready to carry our democratic republic forward.

Thank you for considering my testimony.