



Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

SB0008 Education – Maryland Civic Excellence Program – Established

Bill Hearing Date January 29, 2025

Position: Support

January 26, 2025

Dear Honorable Committee Members,

My name is Zander Hine, and I am a resident of Washington County. I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 0008, which seeks to establish the **Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence program**.

As a high school student, I have seen firsthand the benefit that civic education has in shaping responsible, informed citizens. Civic education and engagement can take a student - who isn't quite sure how they fit into society - and empower them to get involved and feel fulfilled. Unfortunately, civic engagement often takes a backseat in our educational system, and this bill offers a critical opportunity to change that.

The Maryland Seal of Civic Excellence will:

- Encourage students to engage more deeply with civic education and activities.
- Highlight the importance of staying informed on local, state, and national issues.
- Inspire schools to integrate more civic learning into their curricula.

In my community, I have been serving with multiple nonprofit organizations since 8th grade. It was around this time when I first volunteered with the local chapter of Sleep in Heavenly Peace, a nationwide organization that builds free beds for those in need. I was doing my first bed delivery with the organization, going to clients' houses and delivering the beds and assembling them. In one house that my team delivered to, there was a family of five, all sleeping on the same mattress on the floor. We made a bunk bed and a twin bed for two girls and a boy respectively. After we had finished building the bed, the boy started jumping up and down on his bed, seemingly more excited than his sisters. His parents told us that it was his birthday that day, and for his fifth birthday, he received a bed! Just seeing the joy on that little boy's face and being able to be a part of what caused that joy was one of the most moving experiences of my life.

This experience pushed me to serve more, because I now knew that I could make a direct impact in the lives of the less fortunate in my community. Experiences like this not only made me feel good, but I could tell I was genuinely helping these people. Senate Bill 0008 can incentivize other students to

work in their community and be moved and changed like I was. After students experience something like that, they will be hooked and on track to become a civically engaged citizen for life.

In conclusion, **SB0008** is an investment in the future of Maryland's democracy - it is an investment in the future. By supporting this bill, the committee will help ensure that Maryland's students are empowered to actively contribute to their communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Zander Hine
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