



**Promise of Democracy  
Foundation**

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My name is Gregory T. Moore and I serve as president of the Promise of Democracy Foundation, Inc., a non-profit, non-partisan organization that is committed to expanding civic engagement and participation in the democratic process among communities of color, and other underserved communities across the US.

Today we are joining with our partners in the Maryland Civic Education Coalition in support of HB 0271 *the Education - Maryland Civics Engagement Program*. I am writing to lend our support to the bill that is before the House Ways and Means Committee, and urge its swift passage by the committee and the Maryland General Assembly. We are joining the chorus of organizations and individuals who support this important piece of legislation that will incentivize educators, school systems, teachers, and students to prioritize civic learning and participation.

As a longtime voting rights advocate and author of the newly released book, *Beyond the Voting Rights Act*, I can attest first hand that participation in our democracy has not come easy for most African Americans, young people, or low wealth citizens. The right to vote for many of our communities have come only through many decades of grassroots advocacy and hard fought legislative and legal battles. Even today our work continues across the US as we fight against attempts to dilute the voting strength of African Americans, young people, the disabled, and so many other American citizens.

Senate Bill 0271 serves as a refreshing reminder that we can work proactively, across party lines to lift the importance of civic education within our school systems across the state. Far too many young people have lost faith in our government institutions. Far too many today feel that their voices are not being heard by political leaders. Many feel their voices can only be heard through protest and civil unrest. An even greater number withdraw from voting and civic participation altogether, having never experienced the true benefits of full citizenship.

Through the creation of a Seal of Civic Engagement, the state of Maryland can provide our schools and educators added tools to incentivize young people to become more civic minded and engaged in public service initiatives during these important formative years in primary and secondary education. It will give students graduating from Maryland Public Schools a seal of civic excellence that will help them achieve even greater success in participation in government and service to their community and their nation.

Given the growing level of civil discourse in our nation, there could be no better time to pass this important initiative. I urge the members of the Ways and Means Committee to send Senator Justin Ready's bill, SB0271 to the floor for final passage by the Maryland General Assembly in this session. Thank you!