

Education Committee

JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-7009

AN ACT CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CONNECTICUT

Title: STATE SEAL OF CIVICS EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT.

Vote Date: 3/12/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable

PH Date: 2/26/2025

File No.: 317

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

REASONS FOR BILL:

The bill was proposed to promote and recognize student achievement in civics education. The bill establishes the Connecticut State Seal of Civics Education and Engagement, which school governing boards can place on diplomas and transcripts of students who meet specific criteria demonstrating proficiency in civics. This bill seeks to encourage civic knowledge and participation among students, acknowledge their accomplishments in this area, and foster an informed and engaged citizenry.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Stephanie Thomas, Secretary of the State](#): testified in support of House Bill 7009, emphasizing the importance of civics education in fostering informed and engaged citizens. She highlighted that the proposed Connecticut State Seal of Civics Education and Engagement would recognize students who demonstrate proficiency in civics, thereby encouraging active participation in democratic processes. She expressed that initiatives like this are essential to sustaining a healthy democracy and preparing young people to contribute meaningfully to their communities.

[Charlene M. Russell-Tucker, Commissioner, CT State Department of Education](#): provided testimony in support of the bill but suggested some language revisions to allow the seal to be affixed to the diploma of any graduate. She proposed revising lines 4–21, from “local or regional board of education” to “a Connecticut diploma-issuing entity,” to ensure that private schools are also permitted to affix the seal. She also recommended changing the

graduating class to 2027 to allow students a more reasonable amount of time to meet the criteria to earn the seal, and to give LEAs sufficient time to develop procedures.

TJ Nuccio, Megan Baker, and Melvette Hill, Children's Policy Analysts, The Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity: strongly supported H.B. 7009, highlighting its potential to elevate civics education at a time when national proficiency in civics and history is declining. They shared that recent data shows a drop in U.S. history scores and more students performing below basic levels. CWCSEO emphasized the success of its own programs, Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) and Children's Leadership Training Institute (CLTI), which have significantly boosted civic knowledge and participation. They argued that expanding access to structured civic education is vital for fostering informed, engaged citizens and sustaining a healthy democracy.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Joslyn DeLancey, Vice President, Connecticut Education Association: strongly supports H.B. 7009, stating that the proposed Connecticut State Seal of Civics Education and Engagement was a meaningful way to promote civic literacy and responsibility. In CEA's view, the Seal recognized students who demonstrated strong civic knowledge and engagement and signaled to colleges and employers their readiness to participate in democratic life. The Association emphasized that by establishing clear standards, the bill reinforced civics as a rigorous and essential part of education and reflected Connecticut's commitment to preparing informed citizens.

Fran Rabinowitz, Executive Director, Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents: expressed support for H.B. 7009, stating that the bill aligned with their 2025 priorities to elevate and improve public education in the state. CAPSS emphasized that the Connecticut State Seal of Civics Education and Engagement offered students meaningful opportunities to demonstrate their commitment to civics through coursework, civic engagement projects, or a portfolio showing proficiency in civics knowledge. According to CAPSS, the bill supported both the SDE's efforts and students' academic and civic growth, reflecting a shared goal of fostering continuous student achievement and engagement.

Sarah Wiederecht & Jason Skrzypiec, Social Studies Teachers, Manchester Public Schools: expressed strong support for H.B. 7009, emphasizing the transformative role of civic education in fostering community, responsibility, and democratic engagement. They asserted that the bill would validate students' civic learning and reinforce its societal value. In their view, civic education equips students with practical knowledge and empowers them to engage meaningfully, from participating in democratic processes to understanding community systems. They argued that awarding a seal not only celebrates student achievement but also affirms that civic engagement is vital to a functioning democracy.

Andrew Feinstein, Attorney, Feinstein Education Law Group: as a member of the Civics, Education, Civics Engagement, and Media Literacy Task Force, testified in support of this bill, while emphasizing that it is only a modest first step in addressing a deeper civic crisis. Mr. Feinstein stated that while this Seal could incentivize student interest in civics, the nation faces a broader breakdown in civil discourse, truth, and democratic norms. He argued that civics education should be treated as essential, similar to math and English, and that public

education must refocus on its core mission of preparing citizens capable of sustaining democracy. He urged the Committee to pursue more transformative reforms beyond the Seal to counter hate, misinformation, and civic disengagement.

Leslie Blatteau, President, New Haven Federation of Teachers: testified in support of this bill, particularly as a social studies teacher. She emphasized the need to prioritize civics education, which is often overlooked because it isn't a tested subject, despite its growing importance in today's political climate.

Laurinda Rua, High School Teacher, Bridgeport: expressed strong support for H.B. 7009, emphasizing the bill's potential to reinvigorate civic education across school districts. She noted that current time constraints, limiting civics to a 10-week course, leave little room for meaningful engagement or service learning. Ms. Rua believes the proposed Seal could help generate broader backing for a more comprehensive civics curriculum that inspires students to take pride in democratic participation.

Tony Perugini, Member, Cheshire Board of Education: spoke in favor of the bill, explaining that creating this seal would help students develop essential life skills, foster civic engagement, and inspire them to be active, contributing members of their communities.

Victoria Tavares, High School Student, Bridgeport: provided testimony in support of H.B. 7009, stating that the Seal would validate and encourage student involvement in civic life. She argued that civic education is essential in an age of misinformation and institutional distrust, and that recognition through the Seal would motivate students like her to stay engaged. Ms. Tavares also urged the committee to expand civics courses from a quarter to a full semester to allow for deeper, more effective instruction. She suggested that the bill is both a recognition of student efforts and an investment in future civic leadership.

Dejhanae Waugh, High School Student, Bridgeport: voiced strong support for this bill, describing it as a powerful motivator for students to take pride in learning about their civic duties. She shared concerns about civics being undervalued in schools, noting that the course is currently limited to a single semester despite its critical role in teaching students their rights and responsibilities. Ms. Waugh emphasized the importance of youth voices in shaping education policy and urged legislators to recognize their role in civic life. She encouraged the committee to pass the bill as a meaningful investment in future leaders.

Michael Lan, Junior, Fairfield Ludlowe High School: expressed their support for H.B. 7009, noting its potential to elevate the importance of civics education among students. He drew a parallel to the Seal of Biliteracy in his district, which has motivated many of his peers to pursue language learning. He suggested that a similar seal for civics would inspire greater engagement and strengthen democratic participation over time.

Sailor Wood-Smith, High School Student, Greenwich: testified in support of the bill, describing it as a much-needed opportunity for youth to gain recognition and motivation in civic life. She shared that students often feel dismissed due to age and lack of experience, yet rarely receive the tools or incentives to change that. The Seal, she wrote, would validate student voices and help build a stronger, more inclusive civic culture. Her testimony called on the committee to support the bill as a way to invest in young leaders across the state.

[Danny Yang, High School Student, Waterbury](#): testified that this bill would help close the gap between students and meaningful civic engagement. He argued that the Seal could shift civic learning from passive memorization to active participation, encouraging students to take ownership of their roles in democracy. He explained that recognizing students in this way would signal that their voices and efforts truly matter. Mr. Yang shared that he views the bill as a catalyst for a broader cultural shift in schools that fosters leadership, confidence, and a stronger civic identity.

The following high school students from Bridgeport strongly support this bill, highlighting their firsthand understanding of how civic education and incentives can drive youth engagement. They believe the bill will both empower students to participate in their communities and equip them to navigate an era of widespread misinformation and declining trust in institutions. By recognizing their often-overlooked civic efforts with a Connecticut State Seal, the bill validates their contributions and encourages them to continue as future leaders:

[An Do](#)
[Lexus Hoymoune](#)
[Alyssa Kinston](#)
[Erika Lazo Flores](#)
[Jose Lopez](#)
[Valeria Pirela](#)
[Sarah Ribeiro](#)

[Chenelle Ricketts](#)
[Melina Rosado](#)
[Emily Santos](#)
[Jha Daiah Stephen](#)
[Catherine Suarez](#)
[Ragnangnewende Zoundi](#)

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Anthony Matarazzo

Date: 4/3/25