

Office of Representative Sydney Jordan  
5th Floor Centennial Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Office of Representative Peggy Bennett  
2nd Floor Centennial Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

March 24, 2025

Dear Co-Chair Jordan, Co-Chair Bennett and Members of the House Education Policy Committee,

The undersigned organizations have a shared commitment to equipping every student with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities to participate as informed members of our self-governing democracy. We urge you to support the creation of a Minnesota Civic Seal (SF 2565/HF 2372) to encourage civic learning, promote participation in democratic institutions, and recognize students who go beyond standard graduation requirements to prepare themselves as citizens.

There is broad concern about declining civic engagement among young people. Many students feel disconnected from civic life and lack sufficient understanding of how our government operates. Currently, only 2 in 5 young people feel prepared to participate civically based on their educational experiences. The bipartisan Civic Seal program addresses these challenges by incentivizing students to develop crucial civic knowledge, skills and dispositions needed for lifelong civic participation.

By establishing a Civic Seal, Minnesota would join twelve other states - both red and blue - that have taken this proactive step to emphasize the value of civic education.

The process of earning Civic Seal involves learning about important civic issues, government functions, democratic principles, and citizen rights and responsibilities. Requirements include completing coursework in civics or government; participating in a project-based assessment; undertaking at least one civic activity outside the classroom; and demonstrating a commitment to civic

values. will provide students with recognition for their achievements while fostering a culture of thoughtful, engaged citizens.

We believe that a healthy democracy relies on active participation from its citizens, and education must play a critical role in fostering civic knowledge, skills, and participation. Research shows that robust civic education correlates with higher voting rates, increased community involvement, and stronger democratic institutions.

We urge you to invest in our state's future by supporting the Minnesota Civic Seal and empowering the next generation to contribute meaningfully to their communities and our society as a whole.

Sincerely,

Michelle Witte  
Executive Director  
League of Women Voters of Minnesota

Jim Davnie  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Alliance With Youth

Amy Meuers  
CEO  
National Youth Leadership Council

Amy Anderson  
Executive Director  
YMCA Center for Youth Voice

Staci Allmaras  
Youth Program Director  
The Bridge Center

Hon. Steve Simon  
Secretary of State  
Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State

March 24, 2025

TO: Representative Peggy Bennett, Co-Chair;  
Representative Sydney Jordan, Co-Chair;  
Members of the House Education Policy Committee

FROM: Lars Esdal, on behalf of Education Evolving

RE: House File 2372

Chairs Bennet, Jordan, and Members of the Committee:

We support HF 2372, establishing a Civic Seal for high school students who demonstrate excellence in civics education and engagement.

Last fall, Education Evolving published recommendations ([educationevolving.org/assessments](https://educationevolving.org/assessments)) for more student-centered assessments in Minnesota—inspired by interviews with more than 70 students, parents, teachers, administrators, and researchers. One key recommendation? Launch a “badging system” that enables students to demonstrate mastery of state standards and other skills in rigorous, real-world ways.

HF 2372 is an encouraging step toward reimagining how we honor and recognize student learning—and equip Minnesota students to thrive holistically.

Seals or badges (different in name only) can reflect a wide range of student learning and talent, create clear and equitable bridges to college and career—and ultimately help students see their progress, gain confidence in their skills, and give cause for celebration.

The working group established by HF 2372 would include civic educators, experts, and—we are thrilled to see—high school students. What better way to ensure a seal is relevant and motivating? This provision further aligns with our recommendations.

This seal would not be the *first* of its kind—the state already has a bilingual language seal—but it could be the *next* of its kind as we imagine more student-centered ways to certify and celebrate learning in Minnesota.



Lars Esdal, Executive Director, **Education Evolving**

[lars@educationevolving.org](mailto:lars@educationevolving.org)

651-252-4452

March 24, 2025

Office of Representative Peggy Bennett  
Office of Representative Sydney Jordan  
Centennial Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Co-Chair Bennett, Co-Chair Jordan, and Members of the House Education Policy Committee,

I'm writing to support creating a Minnesota Civic Seal (SF 2565/HF 2372).

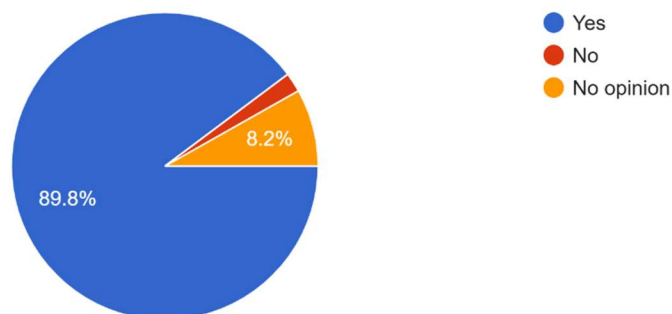
Every year, I recruit and support 250-600 high school students to work as election judges in Minneapolis polling places. Serving as an election judge is often a gateway to greater civic engagement. Many of these teens come to us for a one-day job that will get them out of school for the day and end up seeing themselves and their communities in a new light. More than 90 percent say that they want to serve as an election judge again and recommend it to their friends and family.

They also tell me they want additional reasons to stay involved and to continue to learn how governments operate and how decisions are made in our communities. They want to contribute and be recognized. They tell me that civic seal could be an incentive.

I asked this morning what they thought about this bill and the idea of creating a civic diploma seal. Here's what they said:

Do you support creating a Minnesota Civic Seal to recognize high school students for their civic contributions?

49 responses





Student written comments:

- I think that as America has become increasingly polarized, civic engagement is crucial, especially for young people. From my experience as a student election judge, I learned the how valuable and rewarding supporting one's community truly is. I hope that with a Civic Seal bill, more high school students around Minnesota will be incentivized to engage civically in their communities—each of them taking one fighting step against polarization.
- I think this is a great idea!
- This would show great appreciation to students who are engaged in civic work.
- I think it is important to also have teacher have input on who gets it.
- I really like this idea as many students often go unnoticed for their civic contributions.
- I think this would encourage more young people to get involved and help those who do get involved feel more appreciated for this.

Civic work is part of a well-rounded education, and one that often gets short shrift. Having a structured process that results in earning a civic seal would help students navigate complex systems, reflect on diverse perspectives, and practice critical thinking skills where they can see tangible results.

Not everyone can be (or wants to be) a champion athlete, an honor band member, the lead in a drama, or member of a math team. We need more opportunities to recognize the different areas where our students want to excel and achieve. Civics is one that's appealing to many young people. I'd love for Minnesota schools, like those in 12 other states, to have the opportunity to recognize student civic learning and action with a Civic Seal.

Sincerely,

Caryn Scheel

# Minnesota Civic Seal

Empowering the Next Generation of Engaged Citizens



Our democracy thrives on the active participation of informed and engaged citizens.

However, there is growing concern about declining civic engagement among young people. Many students lack sufficient knowledge about how the government works and feel disengaged from civic life.

This lack of civic engagement is further compounded by limited opportunities for civic learning in schools and the rise of "civic deserts," areas with few places for people to meet and discuss issues. **This trend threatens the very foundation of our democratic society.**

## STATE OF YOUNG PEOPLE 2024 RESEARCH REPORT

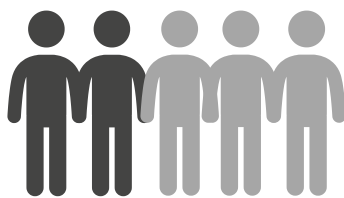
**69%**  
of young people

believe the nation is **more divided than ever**, with many expressing distrust in public institutions and the American political system

Only

**23%**  
of young people

trust adults in their own community.



**2 in 5 young people** feel somewhat prepared for civic participation based on their civic education experiences.

*Amid all of this,*

**9 in 10** (91%)  
young people

believe that **everyone should have access** to civic learning opportunities.

Only

**19%**  
of young people

believe society is headed towards a **better future**.

Source: NORC web survey for APA conducted in June and July 2024 with 1,555 young people ages 13–24 nationwide.



**MNCIVICSEAL.ORG**

# Minnesota Civic Seal

The Minnesota Civic Seal legislation will create a formal recognition on a student's diploma for meeting specific requirements in civic knowledge, skills, and engagement.

- **Civic Knowledge:** Completing coursework in civics or government that meet or exceed the state standards.
- **Project-Based Learning:** Participating in a project-based assessment that demonstrates an understanding of civic engagement, public policy, or government operations.
- **Real World Engagement:** Engaging in at least one civic activity outside of the classroom like voting, attending public meetings, volunteering, or advocating for a cause.
- **Civic Mindset:** Demonstrating qualities like civil discourse and a respect for diverse viewpoints.

Twelve states have already established civic seals to reward students who demonstrate civic knowledge and engagement.



For more information and to get involved:



[MNCIVICSEAL.ORG](http://MNCIVICSEAL.ORG)





## Education Policy Committee

### Testimony in Support of HF 2372

03/24/2025

To the Honorable Members of the Minnesota House Education Policy Committee,

My name is Dr. Tanisha Pruitt, State policy lead- Upper Midwest for iCivics. iCivics is a national non-partisan civic education organization that seeks to make civic education a priority for the health and strength of the nation. I am here to express my strong support for House Bill 2372, which aims to establish the Minnesota Seal of Civic Excellence program.

As an advocate I have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of civic education. Civic knowledge and engagement are crucial for the health of our democracy and the development of responsible, informed citizens. However, these areas often receive insufficient emphasis in our educational system.

The Minnesota Seal of Civic Seal program represents a vital step forward. By formally recognizing students who excel in their understanding and participation in civic life, we can:

- Motivate students to engage more deeply with civic education and activities.
- Highlight the importance of being informed about local, state, and national issues.
- Encourage schools to prioritize civic learning in their curricula.

Civic education is crucial for all students as it fosters political awareness, strengthens community advocacy, and empowers individuals to influence change. By understanding their rights, the legislative process, and the impact of policies, students can become informed citizens to more effectively engage in voting, grassroots activism, and policy advocacy.

In conclusion, HF 2372 is not just about recognizing deserving students; it's about investing in the future of our democracy and ensuring that our young people are prepared to contribute positively to society. Based on iCivics most updated state policy scan, 13 states have adopted a civic seal designation on students' high school diplomas. I urge the committee to support the passage of this bill, so that Minnesota can join in on this national initiative, paving the way for a more engaged, informed, and civic-minded generation.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,

Dr. Tanisha Pruitt, Ph.D.

[Tanisha.pruitt@icivics.org](mailto:Tanisha.pruitt@icivics.org)



My name is Maren Mishell Gossard and I am a senior at Roosevelt High School in Minneapolis. I also have been a part of the Spanish Immersion program since kindergarten at Minneapolis Public Schools. I became interested in civic engagement after working as an election judge in 2023. Since then I have worked as a SEJ (Student Election Judge) in four elections, as a poll book specialist for one and volunteered as Spanish translation help for pop-up early voting. After receiving an invite to tour the main elections office I became passionate about educating my peers on the importance of civic engagement. With the help of NYLC (National Youth Leadership Council) I recorded a podcast and created my own voter education and registration event.

As a student coming from a family where politics were not an often discussed topic at home, the exposure and support I received from my teachers and school community had a huge impact on my ability to voice my opinion on civic engagement. It was my teachers who first introduced me to the idea of working elections. Due to the special circumstance and exposure in the Spanish Immersion Program I have also been surrounded by many students who are the first generation able to vote, or simply to be educated on voting. Seeing how many of my classmates feel the government is not representative of their opinions or beliefs felt the need to share how voting and getting their family members to vote can change this. Many students wish to raise awareness on issues but do not express themselves because they are not educated on how.

This seal can be the first step to help students feel heard by teaching them how to actively express themselves, it allows more trust and future participation in not only the federal government but local government as these are more accessible civic activities in which they can participate. The Civic Seal would change how many students view and interact with our government. Many of my peers have been involved civically, but only through election judging. Many of them have worked towards one or two of the requirements of the seal, but do not share the same knowledge due to the lack of exposure or opportunities civic engagement offers. If this seal was an option, I know my peers would be more encouraged and push themselves to further educate themselves on civic events. If this seal is available in the future, more and more students will find a passion in this work in the same way I have.

Maren Mishell Gossard, 5833 Park ave Minneapolis MN 55417



March 21, 2025

On behalf of the Minnesota FFA Association, I am writing to express our full support for the Minnesota Civic Seal initiative (HF2372/SF2565). As an organization dedicated to developing students into skilled leaders and engaged citizens, we believe FFA is a natural fit to assist in preparing students for civic engagement through hands-on learning experiences.

FFA members gain essential skills through activities such as public speaking, parliamentary procedure, committee work, and leadership opportunities at both the local and state levels. At the state level, students have the opportunity to participate in the Agricultural Policy Experience (APEX), where they engage directly with policymakers, learn about legislative processes, and discuss key agricultural and civic issues. These experiences empower students to think critically, collaborate effectively, and make meaningful contributions to their schools and communities. By participating in FFA, students are not only learning about civic responsibility but also actively practicing it.

The FFA motto—"Learning to Do, Doing to Learn, Earning to Live, Living to Serve"—embodies the values that align with the Minnesota Civic Seal initiative. The final line, "Living to Serve," is particularly significant, as it underscores the importance of service and leadership in strengthening our communities. FFA members are encouraged to take an active role in their communities, developing the skills necessary to be engaged and responsible citizens.

Minnesota FFA wholeheartedly supports this legislation and welcomes the opportunity to assist in preparing students to be active participants in civic life. We look forward to collaborating with policymakers, educators, and community leaders to ensure that Minnesota students have access to meaningful experiences that foster civic engagement and leadership.

Thank you for your commitment to strengthening civic education in Minnesota. We appreciate your leadership and consideration of this important initiative. Please do not hesitate to reach out if we can provide any further assistance in advancing this legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "T.J. Brown". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

T.J. Brown, Ed.D.  
Executive Director, MN FFA Association

[t.j.brown@mnffa.org](mailto:t.j.brown@mnffa.org)

612-624-5234



# MINNESOTA ALLIANCE WITH YOUTH

March 24, 2025

Support for HF2372 (Mueller)/SF2565 (Cwodzinski) Civic Seal Designation

Dear Committee members,

Minnesota Alliance With Youth is a statewide nonprofit that develops leaders who foster young people's individual assets, honor their voices, and prepare them to reach their goals. Guided by our organizational value of Honoring Youth, we believe that youth are experts in their lived experiences, and that it is essential to respect their perspectives by including them in decision-making processes that impact them. As the host organization for the statutorily created Minnesota Youth Council, we believe deeply in developing the civic experience and skills of today's youth.

We strongly support the creation of the Civic Seal designation as an opportunity for Minnesota students. A dozen other states either currently offer this opportunity to their students or are in the process of developing the opportunity for young people in their states. We urge Minnesota to join in this movement to provide youth the opportunity to demonstrate individual excellence and involvement in academic and community involvement.

Additionally, Minnesota Alliance With Youth would like to further recommend that criteria for achieving the Civic Seal be nonpartisan, allow for project-based community involvement, include self-reflection as a component, honor and include recognition of involvement in Tribal government, and emphasize the development and practice of skills in civic discourse and respect for different viewpoints, experiences, and beliefs.

We appreciate the efforts by the authors and encourage Committee members' support of the Civic Seals opportunity for Minnesota students.

Best,



Jim Davnie  
Executive Director  
Minnesota Alliance With Youth