

ILLINOIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY PASSES BILL REQUIRING CIVIC EDUCATION IN MIDDLE SCHOOLS HEADS TO THE GOVERNOR FOR SIGNATURE

CHICAGO, Tuesday, May 28—The Illinois State Senate approved House Bill (HB)-2265 – legislation requiring all Illinois middle schools serving grades 6th, 7th, and 8th to provide a civics class – with strong bi-partisan support. The bill previously passed the House, and now goes to Governor Pritzker for his signature. Representative Camille Lilly (D-78th District) and Senator Jacqueline Collins (D-16th District) championed the legislation in their respective chambers.

“This is truly an exciting time for civics and civic education in the state of Illinois,” says Representative Camille Lilly (D-78th District) and legislation sponsor. “The objective for this bill is clear, we want to create a better environment to empower tomorrow’s voters and residents.

“The affirmative vote is a testament to the commitment of both chambers to create a better environment for the citizens of tomorrow by enhancing civics education today,” said Senator Collins (D-16th District) one of the Senate chief sponsors of the legislation.

Young Illinoisans are ill-prepared for their role as citizens in our democracy. Only 23 percent of 8th graders tested proficiently in civics on the National Assessment of Educational Progress in 2014, and this comes at a time when nearly half of schools have cut back on time devoted to civic learning and the social studies more generally. School administrators agree: According to a 2018 *Education Week* survey, 57 percent of middle school leaders reported that their schools spend too little time on civics, blaming its marginalization on other tested and required subjects.

“HB 2265 is a generational investment in the civic development of our youth. Learning about civics is more than reading about it in a textbook or taking a test. It's about understanding the importance of our role as citizens in a democracy,” says Dr. Shawn Healy, Chair of the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition. “Studies show that young people with strong school-based civic learning experiences develop into informed adults who are deeply engaged in their communities.”

In 2015, Illinois enacted a law to bring quality civic education to all public high schools. It has since been implemented by teachers, schools, and districts throughout the state with early evidence of strong student civic learning and engagement outcomes.

“This legislation will be another milestone in our mission to prepare the next generation of citizen leaders in Illinois,” said David Hiller, President and CEO of the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.

About the Illinois Civic Mission Coalition

The Illinois Civic Mission Coalition (ICMC) is a broad non-partisan consortium including educators, administrators, students, universities, funders, elected officials, policymakers and representatives from the private and non-profit sectors.



Formed in 2004 by the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago, the ICMC is part of the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, a national initiative to restore a core purpose of education to prepare America's youngest citizens to be informed and active participants in our democracy. The Robert R. McCormick Foundation has convened the ICMC since 2010. For more information visit www.McCormickFoundation.org/DemocracySchools.