

TESTIMONY TO THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE  
FEBRUARY 25, 2020  
HB 1011

Good afternoon. I am pleased to be here today to testify in support of House Bill 1011.

I am Joe Fisher, Founder and CEO of First Generation College Bound – a non-profit organization working in Prince George’s County for almost 30 years. I am also joined here today by Cassie Motz from College Bound Foundation of Baltimore, Amma Felix from Collegiate Direction of Montgomery County and Maritza Solano from CASA. We are here to represent our organizations, but we also represent Maryland Advocates for College Affordability and Equity, an Alliance of organizations from around the state that provide comprehensive support to students from low-income families to enroll and graduate from college. Members of this alliance include: Advocates for Children and Youth, College Bound Foundation of Baltimore, CASA de Maryland, College and Career Pathways, College Tracks, Collegiate Directions, End Time Harvest Ministries, FAME, First Generation College Bound, It Takes a Village to Help Our Children, Maryland Business Round Table for Education, MERIT Health Leadership, The Baltimore Intersection and The Training Source.

We also are pleased to have two students here today who have benefited from our programs - Emma Hughes and Daisy Valasquez.

We support HB 1011 because it would establish the Maryland Higher Education Outreach and College Access Program as a permanent state program. Making it a permanent program would help ensure our non-profit organizations, who often survive with very limited funds, can continue their work with low-income students and parents by providing support and outreach to make college accessible. Our non-profit organizations help fill critical gaps in our educational system so these students can receive the kind of ongoing, one-on-one assistance they need to be successful.

First Generation College Bound has been in existence for over 30 years and has helped more than 2,100 students to attend college - 1,100 are currently enrolled, and 788 students have earned a college degree – including 2 PhDs, 14 Doctorates and 137 Masters degrees! Most of our students attend (or attended) Maryland colleges and universities.

What I have learned from 30 years of working with low-income families is how much these families benefit from organizations such as First Generation College Bound. My organization, as well as the others in our Alliance, are deeply involved in their communities, providing the encouragement, hands on assistance and troubleshooting that these students and their families need to navigate the complicated system that currently exists in the college and the financial aid application process. The passage and funding of HB 1011 will enable FGCB and others members of the Alliance to continue providing the needed outreach for students from low income families to attend college.

First Generation College Bound  
Summary Report on College Degrees Attained  
February 2020

PhD	2
Doctorate	14
Master's.	137
Bachelor's	540
Associate's	95
Total	788