

TESTIMONY OF ADAM I. SHAREEF
ASSOCIATE, FRANKLIN AND PROKOPIK P.C., AND CO-CHAIR OF THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION,
FANNIE ANGELOS PROGRAM FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
MARYLAND STATE SENATE

FEBRUARY 12, 2020

IN SUPPORT OF SB 435

Good Afternoon Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chair Kegan, and members of the Committee. My name is Adam I. Shareef, and I am a second-year associate at Franklin and Prokopik, Co-Chair of the Alumni Board, a subcommittee of the Fannie Angelos Program for Academic Excellence (“FAP”), and a proud member of this illustrious organization. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 435.

Simply put, the legal profession lacks diversity. This lack of diversity can be seen in all facets of law and across all disciplines. In addition, the legal system disproportionately impacts communities of color. People of color are excluded from the practice of law, while, simultaneously being unfairly impacted by the rule of law. This juxtaposition placed my dreams in jeopardy. From an early age I knew I wanted to be a lawyer but had no idea how. The FAP would become the bridge to those dreams. At its core, FAP is a talent search program that identifies qualified candidates from Maryland’s Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The program vets, prepares, and supports the students of these universities and ushers them through the LSAT and into Law School. For those who attend the University of Baltimore, there is hands on support and a community of students to learn from. Without the program I would not be before you today.

I embarked upon a dream but had little guidance. During my junior year at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore I entered the program and was introduced to the LSAT. During that time, I also received my first experience with the law school process. Previously, I told people that I wanted to be a lawyer, but I had no idea what that meant. During my LSAT preparation I not only learned the process but was also given the tools to help me achieve my goals. With the Program’s help, I was able to take the LSAT and subsequently gain acceptance into the University of Baltimore School of Law.

Once admitted I expected that my connection with the program would end. What I found however, was a second family. FAP provided in-depth support during my first year, grounding advice during my second, and practical career help during my third. In short, the program helped prepare me and, in many respects, convinced me that I could succeed in this profession. Upon graduating I served as Law Clerk for the Honorable Michelle Hotten of the Maryland Court of Appeals. Following that position, I went into private practice with Franklin and Prokopik, P.C., a position that I hold today. In sum, I cannot overstate the value of the program and its impact on the broader legal community. With the passage of SB 435 you will ensure that the program not only continues, but flourishes. Thank you for your time and consideration.