

**TESTIMONY OF MICHAEL I. MEYERSON
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SCHOOL OF LAW AND DIRECTOR AND COFOUNDER, FANNIE ANGELOS
PROGRAM FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE**

IN SUPPORT OF SB 435

**COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
MARYLAND STATE SENATE**

Feb. 12, 2020

Good afternoon Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Committee. My name is Michael Meyerson, and I am the DLA Piper Professor of Law at the University of Baltimore School of Law and the Director and Co-founder of the Fannie Angelos Program for Academic Excellence. Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 435.

Professor Michael Higginbotham and I began this Program because we saw that a large pool of smart and ambitious students at Maryland's Historically Black Colleges and Universities were not able to realize their dreams of attending law school. We also saw that the legal profession in Maryland and in the nation suffers from an unacceptable lack of diversity. As the National Association for Legal Career Placement found in November, 2019, nationwide:

African-Americans make up just 1.97% of law firm partners.

African-American women make up only 0.75% of law firm partners.

African-Americans make up just 4.76% of law firm associates.

African-American women make up only 2.80% of law firm associates.

The Program has a simple philosophy: If you identify talented individuals and level the playing field, diversity inevitably happens. Our Program has been an extraordinary success. We have helped more than 100 students gain admission to law school. Our students increase their LSAT scores by a far greater amount than those not in the Program. They consistently outperform law students with similar entering credentials. We are proud to have won the prestigious American Bar Association's Diversity Leadership Award.

The key to our success, the key to levelling the playing field, is to recognize the obstacles that can prevent success and help students transcend them. We not only provide an intensive LSAT program for HBCU students, we also provide them with constant one-on-one mentoring with law school faculty and Program graduates. For those who attend the University of Baltimore School of Law, we provide not only an extraordinarily effective academic support system, we also work with students on a wide range of non-academic issues, including health, family matters, and finances, that can interfere with academic success.

Funding from this bill will permit the law school to both expand the number of HBCU students we help and provide better and more effective assistance. In particular, we would be able to offer paid Summer Externships, housing, and testing for learning disabilities, anxiety, and depression.

This Program has already changed lives and increased diversity in Maryland's legal community. With the passage of SB 435, we will see even greater and more impactful changes.