

My name is Tikeetha Thomas. I am a mother of a current 6th grader attending Dora Kennedy French Immersion School in Greenbelt, Maryland. Before I was a mother, I was a student in Prince George's County Public Schools. I attended Buck Lodge Middle School in Adelphi and High Point High School in Beltsville. I went on to attend and graduate from the University of Maryland at College Park.

Education has always been something that has mattered to me. At that time, my family was considered a working poor family. My mother was a single parent raising three children on her own and trying to get her degree. I remember when my mother tried to get food stamps and was told that she made \$10 too much to qualify. It was something I never forgot. There was honestly more month than money. But school was my outlet. It was where I discovered that I hated chemistry because I couldn't titrate but that I had a gift for writing.

There is no easy answer to fund The Blueprint for Maryland's Future, but I need you to understand that we need quality schools. Maryland can't continue to lag behind other states and not invest in its children. By increasing access to quality education, the results can be transformational for an individual, a community and society at large. The value of investing in education is indisputable: it reduces inequality between women and men, improves economic development, promotes peace, and lifts people out of poverty.

The tech companies have significant impact on our daily lives yet are not returning equivalent value to our state, as evidenced by the lack of funding for our public schools. This is innovative, smart legislation and I urge the committees in the strongest terms to support this legislation.

Even though my upbringing started off bleak my family survived and thrived. My mother graduated from the University of Maryland at College Park, attended Trinity College for her Master's and Morgan State University where she got her doctorate in education.

I'm a mother of an 11 year old boy who attends a public school in Prince George's County in District 22 where Vice-Chair Washington is our Delegate and I thank him for his leadership on this bill

I support House Bill 695 as this is a vehicle in which to fund the Kirwan Commission's recommendation.

Every child in this state deserves the opportunity to excel.

Thank you.