



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: Senate Bill 40 - Higher Education – Richard W. Collins III Leadership With Honor Scholarship – Bowie State

SPONSOR: Senator Peters

HEARING DATE: January 27, 2021

COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 40**, which would require the Office of Student Financial Assistance within the Maryland Higher Education Commission to award at least 25% of the annual \$1,000,000 grant money from the Richard W. Collins III Leadership With Honor Scholarship to students at Bowie State University.

It was a sad night in Prince George's County and Maryland, when Lt. Richard W. Collins III, who was only 23 years old at the time, was stabbed to death on May 20, 2017. A ROTC student and leader at Bowie State University, Collins was just two days removed from having been commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army, and only three days away from graduating.

Collins death and the advocacy for his legacy, sparked meaningful conversations on college campuses across the state on race relations, student safety and community building. The proposed legislation builds on the state legislature's prior efforts to honor his service and life, by providing scholarships to other minority ROTC students at our state's HBCUs; an effort that was led by the bill sponsor and the late Senate President Emeritus Thomas V. "Mike" Miller.

In November 2018, Collins' family created the 2nd Lt. Richard W. Collins III Foundation to support ROTC cadets at Maryland's four Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Bowie State, Morgan State, Coppin State and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. The scholarship fund aids future officers who will be commissioned, not only financially, but providing moral support as well.

Since being established, the fund has awarded scholarships to more than 100 scholars enrolled at the states' HBCUs.

This legislation adds additional equality guardrails, ensuring that at least 25% of the funds go to Bowie State University, Maryland's first historically Black university. This 25% allocation preserves funds solely for 2nd Lt. Collins III's alma mater; supporting the University's ROTC students, and insuring they feel included, respected and valued as members of their campus, in addition to vital financial aid.

2nd Lt. Richard Collins III was a true hero; a hero of Prince George's County, Maryland and this nation. Now more than ever it is evident that we need and should support members of our armed services who serve with honor and integrity, as Richard Collins III did. Collins, who had dreams of becoming the next Colin Powell, was described by Bowie State University's ROTC's recruiting operations officer as "a star, a model cadet... [and that] he had what it would take to be a general."

Setting aside these funds in the scholarship bearing his name, signifies to the community at Bowie State and at large, that his legacy did not end on that sad night in May 2017, but lives on in the future Bowie State University students who will go on to serve our nation, lead our troops and honor Collin's legacy and family.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 40** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.