

**HOUSE BILL 1245**  
**SUPPORT FOR APPROVAL**

First Generation College Bound, a current Next Generation Scholars (NGS) grant recipient, on behalf of the College Bound Foundation, Maryland Business Roundtable, and It Takes a Village, urges passage of House Bill 1245 as submitted by Delegate Alonzo Washington. FGCB and the other aforementioned organizations have had the privilege and benefit of being part of the first cohort of grantees during the 2017-2018 school year, funded by HB 1403. Over the last three and a half years, we have learned a great deal about best practices and lessons learned. This bill incorporates these recommendations, which will strengthen the overall impact of the State's support to increase opportunities by Maryland's low income students to obtain a postsecondary degree. Over the last several years we have worked closely with the Maryland State Department of Education and the Maryland Higher Education Commission; and have been able to propose changes to policies to remove barriers by these students in applying for financial aid and gaining entry into Maryland's extraordinary higher education system. The current language recognizes geographical variations among the populations served and unique characteristics of the funded agencies. Specifically, it allows for flexibility in recruitment based on each organization's strengths, as well as the type of documentation to be used to determine eligibility and ensures the continued growth of a pipeline students eligible for Guaranteed Access and Educational Assistance grants.

HB 1245 will ensure that students of poverty continue to receive the level of support and intervention required to attend the best fit and affordable college. Under these programs, students are made aware of financial resources provided through the State; and most importantly, receive the level of support needed to complete the financial aid process to increase access to Maryland higher education funding streams. By allowing individual programs to establish recruitment and programmatic practices best suited to the needs of their student base and updating the eligibility criteria to include alternate standards for determining low income status, e.g., TANF and HUD, we will be able to serve a broader pool of students and increase participation rates. As a result, NGS will impact not only GA eligible students, but all low-income students supporting them to attend an affordable institution of higher education.

This year NGS programs will celebrate their first graduating class. There is no doubt we will be excited especially given the challenges we faced in delivering virtual services as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. More exciting, though, is the prospect of maintaining an on-going pipeline for students of poverty through the passage of HB 1245.

Most sincerely,

Joseph A. Fisher  
CEO & Founder  
First Generation College Bound



Chief Operation Officer  
Maryland Business Round Table for Education