



The Universities
AT SHADY GROVE

**Testimony to the Appropriations Committee
In Support of HB1446
March 15 2022
Mr. Francisco Cartagena Bracamonte
USG Graduate Student & Member of the Board of Advisors**

Members of the House Appropriations Committee:

My name is Francisco Cartagena. I am a proud graduate student at USG, completing a Masters in Cybersecurity from UMBC; working full-time for the City of Gaithersburg and serving on the Board of Advisors as a representative for alumni students. I am a pathways student meaning I have my HS diploma from Montgomery County Public schools, my Associates degree from Montgomery College and completed my undergraduate degree at USG.

Montgomery County is where my family migrated from El Salvador years ago; it is where as an MCPS student I found emotional support working with a local non-profit; it is where I married and where I work. The USG campus is not just the best place for me to reach my academic goals it was the only place. Like so many of my peers, by the time I was thinking about my undergraduate degree, I was already deeply rooted in my community and for personal and financial reasons I could not leave.

That's why I am speaking to you today. I need you to know why USG is the pride of Montgomery County and our exemplary State and I ask that you re-double your efforts to invest in the USG model that can work for thousands more students like me.

As a former undocumented student, I can attest to how challenging it can be to want to be able to attend college in your state and not be able to afford it. As a documented student, I can attest to how expensive and intimidating private and federal loans are.

As a USG student, I can attest to how comforting it is to attend an accessible and affordable campus that looks out for the student's best interest. At USG, I have been presented with ample opportunities to grow professionally at the same time as being able to advance through my academic journey.

Students like me are working adults at the same time as we are students. I could not drive to UMBC. I needed to attend an institution that allowed me to better my circumstances all along the way. USG led me to the opportunity to intern for Congressman Jamie Raskin and eventually to land a full-time job at the City of Gaithersburg as a Human Resources Technician and now in a supervisory capacity.

In short, I am asking you to keep on investing in USG. As a representative of the alumni of students like me from programs at USG, I ask that you support HB1446 with the modification that the funds provided be supplemental to USG's current base budget funding. USG is a beacon of academic hope for so many. In supporting USG you are helping students to achieve their academic goals at the same time as ensuring their career competitiveness.