

**Christian Black**

**Feb. 17, 2022**

**To the Honorable House of Delegates,**

**My name is Christian Black, I am writing to support funding for the HB 648 Maryland Higher Education Outreach and College Access Program. I graduated from Sherwood High School in Montgomery County, Maryland where I enrolled in First Generation College Bound. I am currently a junior at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County for my bachelors in mechanical engineering. Since graduating from Sherwood High School, First Generation College Bound has been by my side every step of my academic journey. During the admission process for various colleges on my watch list, any questions I had or concerns were answered by the family at FGCB. Not only did they answer my questions, but notified me of any financial aid I was missing out on. Prior to enrolling in FGCB, I was not aware of MDCAPS nor the Guaranteed Access grant which paid off my college tuition in full. My single mother does not know anything about the admission process or financial aid. Without the support and information I received from Joe Fisher and the hard-working members of FGCB Team, I would be drowning in college debt. There might be some individuals who believe the students enrolled in this type of program only receive information about resources they can use for college, but deep relationships and personal interactions are developed between the student and FGCB. There are countless times where Mr. Fisher and FGCB representatives have come to Sherwood High School to see me and my progress with the colleges I was interested in. Not only did they come and visit me, but they have always given me a call to check my well-being, my academic progress, and give me deadlines for any financial aid that applies to me. Emails are always sent out by the program to notify students of any internship, scholarship, and grant opportunities. I am also invited to events to hear stories other than mine or even share my own story to help other students. FGCB to me is more than a program, it is a family. FGCB is a program that should receive funding because they do their job better than anyone else. Not only that, but they go beyond what a program usually does and do not settle at the bare minimum. To build relationships with each and every student and remember their hardships and individual stories is amazing. Their dedication to making sure every young man and woman gets the chance to go to college and receive financial aid is admirable. Any conversation that I had with any member at FGCB representative felt like having a conversation with a close family member who cares about everything going on in my life. Without the support of FGCB, I would not be in the ideal situation I am in now.**