

Testimony **IN FAVOR** of House Bill 415 – Operating Budget – Funding – Scholarships
for Nonpublic School Students (BOOST) – House Appropriations Committee

March 1, 2022

Chairwoman McIntosh and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for holding this hearing on HB415, and hearing from parents such as myself regarding the importance of this remarkable program.

As a constituent of your 43rd district madame chair, I have the utmost respect and admiration for the outspoken leadership you have brought to the district, and I hope that your leadership continues by moving forward favorably on this piece of legislation.

As a single father raising two black boys in the City of Baltimore, it has been extremely difficult trying to ensure that my children remain competitive with their peers in surrounding counties given the extremely low bar set in area public schools, and the volatile surroundings they have had to endure on a daily basis. As a state employee working for the Register of Wills for Baltimore City, my income doesn't afford me the opportunity to send my boys to some of the more expensive private schools in the area, therefore, they had to attend their area district high school after years of attending one of the premiere charter schools in the district – Baltimore International Academy.

Last year, my oldest son Malik was accepted into what is said to be one of Baltimore's leading area high schools, Mergenthaler High (MERVO technical institute). He was excited about this opportunity given that his mentor and friend, Baltimore's Mayor Brandon Scott, had told him that this was his alma mater. However, after only one week into the school year, my son was beaten up, harassed and had his life threatened by a group of young men who were never disciplined for their actions, other than having a verbal warning and parent conference.

These actions were followed by my son returning to school, after being out for ten days after contracting the Coronavirus, and having his watch and necklace stolen from these same individuals. And since the school said they could not discipline them all, they decided instead to have my son transferred for "his own safety". I was then greeted by the city's school administration with an ultimatum that either he transfers to a school in West Baltimore, seven and half miles from our East Baltimore residence OR send him to an alternative school.

Given those two choices, which really was no choice at all for a parent whose child was in the gifted and talented program known as the Ingenuity Project throughout middle school, I had to find an alternative means for my child to continue his education in hopes of landing in a highly valued college one day. Fortunately, I was able to get him accepted as a late entry into Saint Francis Academy – a highly respected private institution that costs way more than what I can reasonably afford over the next four years.

Unfortunately, I was not able to apply for most scholarships and grants given that he was a late entry, but I did come across the BOOST program, which has helped many of the

school's parents and children a great deal. And while I have never received their funding to-date, and there is no guarantee that I will, as a parent who has been forced to come out of pocket over the past few months to ensure my son gets a quality education – and trust me it has been well worth it; I know that this funding will continue to help hundreds of students across Maryland – especially those in Baltimore City.

PLEASE FUND THIS PROGRAM INTO THE FUTURE FOR PARENTS LIKE ME WHO WANT THIS OPTION! There are many more parents across the state and the City of Baltimore who just like me, are unaware of this remarkable program.

HB415 is a tool to help you make a difference in Baltimore City. Please pass this bill – **OUR CHILDREN DESERVE IT!**

Thank you!