

Data March 14th, 2023

Good Afternoon,

My name is Daisy Velasco and I am here to testify for support of HB 1129. I graduated from the University of Maryland College Park in December 2019 with a bachelor's in Community Health. While this is a major victory, it could not have been done without the help of First Generation College Bound.

I learned about First Generation College Bound, when I was in middle school. At the time, I wasn't sure what the program did to help students, but I knew that I wanted to go to college, so I decided to take a chance and enroll. Things happened along the way and unfortunately I was disconnected from the program. I forgot about it. However, a few years later Mr. Fisher came to my high school looking for me, and once he found me I was able to see FGCB complete its mission through me.

From the moment I came back to the program, First Generation College Bound guided me through the college process. They showed me how to apply to schools and more importantly, how to apply for financial aid. First Generation College Bound's outreach, both on an individual and a group level, provided me the needed advice, encouragement, and support to receive the Maryland Higher Education, Howard P Rawling GA grant to graduate college with zero debt. Now, First Generation College Bound is providing this same outreach to my younger brother. Because of the help of First Generation College Bound, my brother is now a junior at the University of Maryland College Park and he has also received the Maryland Higher Education Guaranteed Access Grant.

As for me, I am now a student at the University of Baltimore School of Law. Although there is very little financial help available for school after undergraduate studies, FGCB has helped me find the few resources that do exist. Even though I have already completed my undergraduate studies, FGCB has never just left me on my own, they continue to be a tremendous support. Each individual within FGCB continues to provide support in a multitude of ways.

It does not matter what your GPA is. It does not matter how smart you may be. Many times it doesn't even matter how hard you may try. Without the guidance and support of an outreach and college access program such as First Generation College Bound, the college dream remains just that, a dream.

FGCB has invested time and resources for students like me to be successful and I am grateful to them. If it were not for First Generation College Bound my story of success would be completely different. With the help of this Bill, I am certain that there will be many more stories like my own.

Thank You!