



First Generation College Bound

“Bridging the Home, Church, School and, Community for Success”

March 14,2023

Good Afternoon, Chairman Barnes and members of the Committee.

My name is Joe Fisher. I am the CEO and Founder of First Generation College Bound and Chair of the Maryland Alliance for College Affordability and Equity. I am pleased to be here to testify in support of HB1129 Maryland Higher Education Outreach and College Access Program Funding with an amendment to remove the financial match.

For 32 years FGCB has been providing Education Outreach and College Access to more than **2600** low-income students to attend college and graduate. FGCB is one of the many programs that recognize the required human resources to reach the many eligible low-income students. Due to the coaching outreach and college access support our students have received, 1,500 are currently enrolled in college and 1,032 have higher education achievements.

It is important you know I recognized the value and need for Outreach and College Access services to low-income students, due to my personal experience growing up in Public Housing. In my community, only outstanding academic students or athletes attended college due to earning a scholarship. Knowing that money was needed to attend college, graduate high school, get a job, or join the military was the goal. However, I become the stereotypical outstanding athlete and was awarded a scholarship to attend college. During my freshmen year, I learned I was eligible for a grant equal to my scholarship. The next year I accepted the grant and stayed on the team informing my coach so he could recruit another student-athlete to be awarded the scholarship. From this experience, I learned that students from low-income families were eligible for need base grants and were not aware. As a result, FGCB was founded recognizing the need for Outreach and College Access services for low-income students to attend college and graduate. Maryland State Senator Alonzo Washington growing up in public housing represents one of our many Alumni, who received College Outreach and

8101 Sandy Spring Road, Suite 230, Laurel, Maryland 20707

Phone: 301-490-0911 Toll Free Fax: 866-811-0130

www.fgcb.org



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Access Services receiving the Guaranteed Access Grant. He attended the University of Maryland Park to graduate with little to no debt.

Today knowing the many students from low-income families in Maryland needing the Outreach and Access Program services, First Generation College Bound supports increase funding to help the many low-income students to attend college not the few with an amendment of a match not being required

Sincerely,

Joseph A. Fisher
CEO/Founder

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