

Dear Committee Members,

I am here today to speak about the critical role that community-based organizations, such as FGCB, play in supporting students from low-income families in their pursuit of higher education. Without organizations like FGCB, many students would not have access to the resources and support they need to succeed in high school and college.

Growing up in a low-income household, I faced many barriers to achieving my educational goals. However, thanks to the support and guidance of organizations like FGCB, I was able to overcome these obstacles and pursue higher education. FGCB provided me with academic support, college and financial aid application assistance, and mentorship, which were all critical in helping me navigate the college admissions process and secure funding through the GA grant program.

As a former recipient of this grant, I can attest to the vital role it plays in making higher education more accessible to students from low-income families. I grew up in a single-parent household with limited financial resources, and without the Maryland Guaranteed Access Grant, I would not have been able to afford to attend college.

This grant provided me with the financial assistance I needed to pay for tuition, textbooks, and other necessary expenses, and it allowed me to focus on my studies without the added burden of worrying about how I would pay for my education. The Maryland Guaranteed Access Grant not only helped me achieve my educational goals, but it also opened doors for me that would have otherwise been closed. With a college degree, I was able to secure a job while going to school that provided me with stability and the opportunity for upward mobility. This grant played a crucial role in helping me break the cycle of limited resources that had been a part of my life. I strongly support the Maryland Guaranteed Access Grant because I know firsthand how it can change lives.

Without organizations like FGCB, I would not have had access to these resources, and my journey to higher education would have been much more challenging. I firmly believe that community-based organizations are essential in bridging the gap between low-income students and the resources they need to succeed in higher education.

I strongly urge the state to fund more community-based organizations that support students in their pursuit of higher education, particularly those who are eligible for the GA grant program. This grant has helped thousands of students like me achieve their dreams of higher education, and it has played a vital role in increasing the number of college graduates in our state. Investing in these organizations is investing in the future

of our state, as it helps to ensure that all students, regardless of their socioeconomic background, have the opportunity to pursue higher education and achieve their full potential.

In conclusion, I thank you for considering the importance of community-based organizations like FGCB in supporting students from low-income families. I urge you to provide the necessary funding to support these organizations and help ensure that every student has access to the resources they need to succeed in higher education.