



# First Generation College Bound

*"Bridging the Home, Church, School and, Community for Success"*

February 13, 2024

Good Afternoon, Chairman Ben Barnes, Vice Chair Mark Chang and members of the Committee

My name is Joseph Fisher. I am the CEO and Founder of First Generation College Bound. I also serve as the chair of the Maryland Alliance for College Affordability and Equity.

I am pleased to provide testimony on behalf of the Maryland Alliance for College Affordability and Equity. I am testifying in support of HB624 The Next Generation Scholars of Maryland Program to be administered by the Maryland Higher Education Commission with amendments. This is due to MHEC's knowledge and experience of need-based financial aid for low-income students supporting them to attend an affordable college. The Maryland State Department of Education has done well at administering the program. However, it does not have the need base financial knowledge and experience in the area of financial aid to address the needs and concerns of NGS Programs. As a result since year 1 of the program, MSDE has reached out to MHEC for support. I find this understandable as MSDE's focus is on students being college and career-ready. However, for those students who are eligible for need-based financial aid, completing the process with support from the NGS program is most valuable. The MHEC funds awarded will enable the students to attend a Maryland best fit and affordable college.

Recognizing the importance of MHEC administering the grant, NGS programs recognize and appreciate the partnering with the schools they are providing service. As a result, MHEC must have a full-time person not only administering and managing the NGS Program but also collaborating with MSDE for success.

During my years of promoting college affordability to low-income students, with the support of the Maryland Higher Education Commission, there was no doubt in my mind they could attend college and graduate with little to no debt. Due to the financial resources of the Maryland Higher Education Commission there is no excuse for any low-income student in Maryland to attend college if they desire or are made aware they can with NGS Program Support. (please find with this testimony FGCB's Bachelor's Degree data)

As I close, The Maryland Alliance is in favor of HB624 with amendments. I want to thank you for providing this space and time to advocate for the low-income students and parents whom the Alliance represents.

Joseph Fisher  
CEO and Founder

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