

## **Testimony in Support of SB0673**

**Presented by Dhruv Dobariya**

**On Behalf of Illuminate Maryland**

**Maryland General Assembly – 03/05/2025**

Dear Senator Hettleman, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Dhruv Dobariya, a sophomore from River Hill High School, and I am proud to testify today on behalf of Illuminate Maryland, a student-led advocacy organization dedicated to equity, accessibility, and community well-being. Our mission is to ensure that Maryland's youth have a voice in shaping policies that affect their education and future. Today, I urge you to support SB0673, which establishes the Maryland STEM Program to expand access to high-quality STEM education and create new opportunities for students across the state.

As a student deeply invested in STEM education, I have witnessed firsthand how access to strong STEM programs can transform lives. However, I have also seen the disparities that exist in different school districts, where students in underfunded schools lack the resources, mentorship, and hands-on experiences necessary to succeed in STEM fields. A close friend of mine, who dreamed of pursuing a career in engineering, struggled due to the lack of advanced STEM coursework and extracurricular opportunities in his school. Without access to proper resources, he was forced to seek out expensive private programs—an option that many students simply cannot afford. His experience is not unique. Too many students in Maryland are being left behind because their schools do not have the funding or infrastructure to support rigorous STEM education.

SB0673 will help bridge this gap by ensuring that all students, regardless of their background or zip code, have access to high-quality STEM learning opportunities. By establishing a statewide STEM program, this bill will expand curriculum development, provide funding for resources, and create partnerships with industry leaders to give students hands-on experiences in science, technology, engineering, and math. These initiatives are essential in preparing Maryland's youth for the modern workforce and ensuring that our state remains a leader in innovation.

Some may argue that expanding STEM programs will require significant investment, but this bill is an investment in our future. STEM fields drive economic growth, and ensuring students have access to these opportunities will lead to a stronger workforce, increased innovation, and greater equity in education. The long-term benefits of a well-prepared STEM workforce far outweigh any initial costs.

Illuminate Maryland stands firmly in support of SB0673, and we urge the committee to issue a favorable report. By passing this bill, Maryland can ensure that every student has the tools, resources, and support they need to succeed in STEM and beyond.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best regards,  
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