

TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE EDUCATION, ENERGY, AND THE
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE
in SUPPORT TO

SB 552 EDUCATION – HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION
REQUIREMENTS – FINANCIAL AID APPLICATION
FEBRUARY 21, 2025

I am Deja Cobbs, the Director of Programs at First Generation College Bound (FGCB) and I am here in support of SB 552. FGCB is a non-profit organization located in Prince George's County. FGCB's mission is to inspire low-income and first-generation youth to achieve social and economic success by providing advice, encouragement, and support to obtain a college degree. Since 1990 FGCB has had a partnership with Prince George's County Public Schools assisting low income and first-generation high school students with completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the new Maryland State Financial Aid Application (MSFAA). In 2024, our College Access Program served 250 seniors. This class will receive \$14 million in financial aid over the next 4 years to graduate college with little to no debt. This is due to the students completing the FAFSA to be eligible for Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) Scholarships, Pell Grants, your legislative scholarships and more. However, to receive this funding we had to work closely with our students, parents, the MHEC's Office of Student Financial Assistance and the Office of Federal Student Aid to complete the financial aid process.

As we support SB 552, our concern is the required regulations for FAFSA completion. Will there be an opportunity to provide FAFSA regulation input? This request is due to FGCB and other nonprofits years of experience supporting FAFSA completion at our schools. We know how overwhelmed our school counselors are and the challenges students and parents face completing the FAFSA.

In closing, FGCB supports SB 552 for FAFSA/MSFAA completion as it has contributed greatly to our students attending an affordable college and graduating. We know with the right regulations, FAFSA/MSSFA completion will increase the number of students in Maryland attending college and allow them to do so more affordably.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify as FGCB continues to provide FAFSA/MSFAA completion support at our schools, which has been our mission for 35 years.