

**House of Senate  
In Support of SB 755**

Hello, my name is Kelly Atabong, and I'm here to support SB 755. In 2015 my mother became ill and could not take care of me. She was left in my home country of Cameroon. Ever since then I have been in the care of my biological aunt. During my senior year of high school, I had no idea if I would even get into college or how the process worked. The most challenging part was dealing with the dependency override appeal, due to my aunt not having a legal guardianship. First Generation College Bound was there for me, guiding my aunt and ensuring all the paperwork was properly handled so that I could start school on time.

I was introduced to Ms. Deja, who has been incredible throughout this entire college bound journey. She went above and beyond to help me every step of the way. In the spring of my senior year I was accepted into Bowie State University. I was excited however, it was overwhelming, especially since I was living with my aunt, who didn't have legal custody of me. This made the process even longer and more complicated. However, with FGCB's support, everything became much more manageable. They made sure I had all the necessary documents for school, helped clarify any confusion, and kept me on track.

Thanks to FGCB, I was also told about the Guaranteed Access Grant, which significantly helped with my academic expenses. However before I could see if I was eligible for the GA grant I had to see if my Dependency Override Appeal was approved by Bowie State University. After it was approved then I had to complete the same verification with MHEC. I also had to complete these appeals each school year. During my junior year in 2022 I almost lost my GA grant due to needing to complete the same verification again however I did not know I would need to do it every year. If FGCB was not there to help advocate for me with my college's financial aid and MHEC I would have never received the financial aid I was eligible for. My hope is that this appeal process for students in my situation to receive the GA grant would be simplified.

FGCB has had a profound impact on my life, and I am forever grateful. With their support, I was able to graduate from Bowie State University debt-free. My life changed forever in 2024 when I was offered admission to the University of Notre Dame to pursue my dream of becoming a Physician Assistant. I'm deeply thankful for the organization that believes in seeing future leaders succeed, and I hope many other students in similar situations as mine will be able to do the same.