

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT  
HB 688 EDUCATION – HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS – FINANCIAL  
AID APPLICATION  
FEBRUARY 25<sup>TH</sup>, 2025

Hello Everyone,

I am Deja Cobbs and I am the Director of Program Services at First Generation College Bound (FGCB). First Generation College Bound is a non-profit organization in Prince George's County providing College Access services to low-income and first generation students for 35 years. First Generation College Bound provides comprehensive support to students so that they can enroll and graduate from college. Our organization works with students and their families to navigate the complicated processes of preparing and applying for college. A critical part of this process is applying for financial aid.

Since 1990 FGCB has partnered 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 students who 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 HB 688, 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 HB 688 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.