

Bill Number: SB0630
Name: Raheel Ahmad
Position: Support / Favorable

Dear Members of the Maryland General Assembly:

I, Raheel Ahmad, wish to write a letter in support of the bill SB0630, which would enable the continued financial support of specific Adult High School Pilot Programs in important locations in Maryland.

To begin, I would like to share my background in education and my family's struggle with educational access. In my family, there have been instances of multiple severe mental illnesses, that through medical mismanagement, led to a deteriorating financial crisis and social crisis in my home. Later on, while I was a student in university, my younger brother was left alone at home to complete high school in this environment. Subsequently, he did not complete all requirements and would not receive a diploma. After recognizing this, I mobilized my other siblings to lend support, motivation, hope, and a secure financial bed for my younger brother to lean on to go back to complete his diploma requirements. Ultimately, his potential has not yet been wasted.

I tell this story to highlight that without these essential aspects of support and involvement by someone external to my brother's struggles, he would not have been successful. Similarly, I believe that the establishment and continued growth of an Adult High School will provide a path to those that feel they also have no avenue to success post-teenage life. I believe those that will seek out the training available at the Adult High School level will have similar experiences to my own, by which they have lost support, motivation, and a financial ability. Critically, the continued support of an Adult High School provides hope for individuals perceiving they have limitations due to their backgrounds. I believe this is the most important aspect of the program relevant to their success.

As an educator and mentor, I recognize the necessity of specific services an Adult High School – such as the one operated by the group elev8 Baltimore – provides, including services related to mental health, childcare, workforce development, housing, and family engagement. Previously, due to my academic achievements in university, I was able to give back by first becoming a teaching assistant for those underrepresented in science (courses: organic chemistry, genetics). Later on, I had the opportunity to teach my own seminar course in chemistry that allowed me to engage with diverse students and their perspectives. Through these interactions, my understanding and reliance on support outside the classroom developed. Now, as a researcher in the Children's Center at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in the division of Pediatric Surgery and as a member of the Baltimore City Children's Cabinet Literacy Workgroup, every day it dawns on me more and more the compounding issues that place individuals in positions prevent them from achieving their goals, such as finishing high school or joining the workforce productively. In my mind, this places the services of an Adult High School as non-negotiable.

It is my hope that we all recognize the necessity and relevance of an Adult High School, especially in the Baltimore City area. From my understanding, elev8 Baltimore, an organization that could receive funding through bill SB0630, is led by committed members, such as their executive director: Alexandria Warrick-Adams. Alexandria is a dedicated person that has promptly participated in Children's Cabinet Literacy Workgroup, and I am confident Alexandria will show similar resolve for the success of an Adult High School. Furthermore, through strong ties to the Cherry Hill Community and collaborations with Baltimore City Community College, I know that the Adult High School program led by elev8 Baltimore stands to have a high chance of success.

In closing, I would like to offer my full support of the bill SB0630 as proposed by Senator Ferguson on financially funding for Adult High School Pilot programs.

Sincerely,
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