

Randall Phillip Ainsworth

**Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 526
Before the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
February 25, 2021**

Chairman Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee, my name is Randall Ainsworth. I am a first-year law student at the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law and the inaugural Elijah Cummings Scholar. As a member of Maryland Law's Diversity and Inclusions Scholars Initiative, I am pleased to join Dean Tobin in expressing my strong support for SB 256.

I was born and raised in the inner city of Baltimore. I was raised in a single parent home by my mother who told me that I was born with 3 strikes against me. I was black, I was from a single parent home, and I was poor, and she always told me that good enough was never enough. I had to strive to be better to try to level the playing field.

I have seen my share of struggles from a young age. I have experienced prejudice, economic hardships, and homelessness. I spent the majority of my high school and college years finding places to complete my assignments because I lived without electricity. Winter was always the hardest because the daylight seemed few and far between. It was like a symbolism for my life.

One of my hardest memories was in high school when I ran for student government and I lost. It wasn't because I did not have the votes, the tenacity, or experience. I was told that the deciding factor was that the other kids dad was a judge. I imagine that made him more valuable to the school, more valuable to the world....more valuable than me.

This was one of those strikes that I was warned about.

His dad was not only a judge, but he was present. This was two of those strikes that I was warned about. It was a hard lesson to learn.

My story is just one of many stories, from inner city youth who are bright, capable, and eager, but has those same three strikes against them. Kids like I was who did not have a dad who is a judge, or money to fix problems.

The diversity and inclusion scholarship for me was an avenue to level the playing field. It was one less strike to worry about. It afforded me the opportunity to attend law school without putting further strain on my family and it gave me an opportunity to begin life without that strike lingering over my shoulder.

With the diversity and inclusion scholarship, I was given an opportunity to attend the best law school in Maryland. I am able not only to fulfill my dream to be an attorney, but I am able to develop relationships and form lifelong friendships with likeminded individuals.

The diversity and inclusion scholarship gave me a new definition of like kind. Like kind no longer means, the poor kid, or the kid without the dad, or even the black kid. Like kind means other individuals with a dream, focus and a passion for the law.

I am grateful for this scholarship and I am an advocate, not only because of how it has benefited me, but because of how these scholarships will make a difference for those who are coming behind me.

I am an advocate because there are kids, right here in my community where there is violence and poverty and hopelessness. There are kids who need hope.

There are kids who need a chance to be redeemers of their bloodlines and change the dynamics of their families. Without these scholarships many of us will never have a chance to reach our potential and many will stop dreaming.

My name is Randall Ainsworth. I am a University of Maryland Carey Law school student. In 2 years, I will be an attorney, and one day a judge. I am an agent of change and there are others just like me. And like pearls we are a product of our environment. It is our environment that made us who we are and all we need is the opportunity to be who we are. The Diversity and Inclusion Scholars Initiative gives us that opportunity.

For these reasons, I ask you to support SB 256. Thank you!