



March 19, 2024

MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING

Public Hearing FY24 Capital Budget and Amendments to the FY23-28 Capital Improvements Program (CIP),
and FY25 Operating Budget

**Testimony of Amma Felix
President & CEO, Collegiate Directions, Inc. • Bethesda, Maryland**

Good afternoon President Andrew Friedson and Vice President Kate Stewart. I would like to thank you for the invitation to provide written testimony regarding the County Executive's FY25 Operating Budget.

My name is Amma Felix, president & CEO of Collegiate Directions, Inc. (CDI), a comprehensive nonprofit organization that focuses on college access and completion for low-income, first-generation-to-college high school students in Montgomery County. We are one of the organizations recommended to the County Council for FY 2024 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Public Service Grant funding.

We are asking that the County Council fund the County Executive's FY25 operating budget to ensure that vulnerable members of our community receive the services they need to thrive.

Why Funding is Needed

CDI serves students whose families, on average, earn approximately three times less than the median household income in the County.

86% of high school Scholars receive FARMS benefits an indicator of students experiencing serious poverty.

After graduating from college, many low-income students need help transitioning into well-paying careers.

In fact, a 2021 study showed that, even with identical credentials, low-income, first-generation college graduates have more difficulty finding a quality first job. They accept offers more quickly, make less money and take jobs for which they're overqualified because they are less well connected and untrained in the basics of professional job seeking.¹

CDI's CDBG funds are focused on providing Scholars with mentors who can help them successfully navigate into a career; train Scholars in core competencies that align with employer expectations; and serve as a connector for internships and job opportunities.

We ask for your support of the FY 2025 operating budget. It will help CDI provide students, from low-income backgrounds who will be first in their families to graduate from college, with the mentoring, training & access to internships & job opportunities they need to become gainfully employed members of our community.

Thank you!

¹ The Hechinger Report (Sept. 24, 2021 ed.), citing "Different Starting Lines, Different Finish Times: The Role of Social Class in the Job Search Process," Philip S. DeOrtentiis, Chad H. Van Iddekinge, and Connie R. Wanberg, Online First Publication, May 17, 2021. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/apl0000915>.