Good evening councilmembers,

My name is Zainab Abbas. I am the founder and CEO SciTech2U with a seven-member board. Since 2011, SciTech2U has offered students in K-12 science technology, engineering art and math (STEAM) out of school education through experiential learning. For instance, middle and high school students fly airplanes at the local airpark, and experience antigravity in our aeronautics program learning Bernoulli's Principle and four forces of flight. SciTech2U students make major gains in STEM without realizing it because they are having fun. SciTech2U is unique in many ways.

What sets SciTech2U apart from similar organizations like ours is that it is led by Black/African American Muslim female and offers diversity equity and inclusion (DEI). When student steps into our classroom, they are stepping into a professional lab atmosphere. Students learn lab applications, safety, and note-booking techniques.

SciTech2U was founded on mission to provide DEI in STEM. Most people herd of food desert but not many people are familiar with STEM desert. Our mission is to provide underrepresented, K-12 students access to quality, innovative STEAM education using experiential learning meant to engage and enrich their passion for STEAM.

Typically, SciTech2U serves students from diverse backgrounds including 58% African Americans, 21% Asian Americans, and 13% mixed/other races. Approximately 67% of SciTech2U students live in families with incomes at or below 200% of federal poverty guidelines, which is considered low-income in the Montgomery County. Therefore, SciTech2U offer the program for free or low cost to ensure equitable access to high-quality, out-of-school programs. Since 2011, we have served just over 700 students, 500 of them in the last two years.

We understand that many in the underrepresented community have limited resources, such as access transportation so we take our program into the communities that are needed, or we provide transportation reimbursements to families who can make it to our sites. We do our very best to remove roadblocks to allow for DEI. To give you sense of the great need for our service; before the pandemic we served 25 students annually with about three programs. Since the pandemic we average 250 students a year and, on the trajectory, to surpass that this year, serving over 600 students this year (2022) alone.

On average most student increase their knowledge by 54% in the STEM discipline covered in SciTech2U programs. Beyond that our students take everything home where they extend the learning and engage their families (mothers, fathers, siblings etc.) in the process. For instance, in our most recent Excel Beyond the Bell engineering program students received 3D pens, solar powered car, battery operated cars and airplanes. All of the students engineered their own solar and battery-operated machines, and some extended their lesson by interchanging parts and tinkering to make new machine and practice their 3D pen skills with their free time, lowering screen and idle time.

Many parents support and appreciate our work. Our most recent survey of past participants indicates that 65% of our students will pursue a career in STEM.

Many organizations see the value in our work and support our work for instance Montgomery County Collaboration Council partnered with us last year and has supported our programs in the county.

SciTech2U needs more funding so we can support communities like Kengar in Kensington where I grew up, Lincoln Park in Rockville, TobyTown and Scotland Communities in Potomac, Takoma Park and countless other communities that poses to be a STEM and STEAM desert. Just a week a ago I sat in the audience to help resolve violent crime in the DMV region with our very own Councilman Will Jawando and former Montgomery County Police Captain and Montgomery College Professor Sonia Pruitt, Dr. Middlemass from Howard University and Brookings Institute stated that increasing funds for out-of-school time programs help. So, I ask you today to considered SciTech2U and similar organizations like us when finalizing the budget.