

Dear Council,

My name is Gaudy De Leon and I am a Gaithersburg High School alumni of SNEAKERS. I have been part of SNEAKERS for over 6 years and this program means so much to me. Without SNEAKERS I would have struggled a lot in middle school and high school. As a first generation latina girl I have always struggled to fit in as I needed to fit in a box in order to be accepted by others. I didn't grow up in the U.S so changing from my culture, my language and more specifically my own identity was a struggle. SNEAKERS support with my mental health and the resources they gave me to help me in classes truly helped give me a chance to improve not just academically but also as an individual. Without SNEAKERS I would've felt more alone and felt the pressure to change who I was to fit in. SNEAKERS allowed me to be who I am without judgment. In fact they encouraged me to be proud of who I am and in my culture. Through SNEAKERS I was able to excel in my classes and do well in school as I now had a support group who truly valued who I am. SNEAKERS has helped so many girls that felt that no one cared and gave them the chance to grow and become better versions of themselves. SNEAKERS has encouraged me to finish college and keep going in my studies and become the professional I have always wanted to be. Their support and encouragement has fueled my desire for a higher education knowing they have so much faith in me. So, dear Council without programs like SNEAKERS many girls like me would have long given up on a bright future. We aren't just numbers in the educational system, we are voices and we are the future of this country. Don't give up on girls like me for we will do great things in the future. Please continue to support and fund SNEAKERS as bright futures are just waiting to receive a helping hand.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Gaudy De Leon