

Hello, My name is Naomi Asfaw. I'm a senior at Gaithersburg Highschool and I've been apart of SNEAKERS since my freshman year. Under the guidance of Ms. Deb Lopez, my Sneakers sisters and I have created a bond like no other. The sisterhood and trust that grew from this group taught me the value of friendship, girlhood and more importantly loyalty. Over the years, SNEAKERS has taught me to love and empower girls loudly. Through SNEAKERS I learned to not only love myself but to empower other girls with confidence and pride. I've learned to be happy and confident in my own skin and support others in doing the same. This community has given me the ability to share my insecurities and shirt comings and to be received with so much love support and encouragement.

My experiences have also made me more open-minded and knowledgeable. I've gained my own personal voice that I now use to advocate for myself and others. I've gained insights into topics such as sexual education, relationship boundaries, and how to confidently say "no" when needed. As a young Black woman, it's been empowering to learn about these aspects of life, as they allow me to navigate the world with greater awareness and understanding. The lessons I've learned through SNEAKERS have helped me grow into a more self-assured and compassionate individual, ready to face the challenges ahead with confidence and strength.

Graduating from high school this year I wish for every teenage girl to experience SNEAKERS. Sneakers has been a safe haven for me, often some day waking up excited because I knew there was group. its allowed me to open my mind to the world, taught me about finances and budgeting, taught me the importance of friendship and encouraged me to step out of my bubble. I ask this council to continue to fund and support SNEAKERS as for some girls it creates a safe place they might not have anywhere else