To the dear members of the Fairfax County Public School Board,

My name is Fahim Bashar. I am a graduate of Union Mill Elementary School, Liberty Middle School, and Centreville High School. For 11 out of my 12 years of K-12 education, I was a student at the Fairfax County Public schools. Centreville is a beautiful suburb, and the quality of education in FCPS is second to none. I, for one, am proud and blessed to have been given the opportunity to be taught in these schools. Thanks to the great teachers of FCPS, I got accepted into university, and now am about to graduate with a Bachelor’s of Science degree in Computer Science. I recall waking up every morning, excited to hang out with my friends at school and share our lunches in the Cafeteria. I remember waking up on snowy days praying that Ryan McElveen would post about school closures or delays so I could stay at home and have hot chocolate while watching Hallmark movies or play outside with my friends. The field days at UMES were so much fun, especially the last day of school in the sixth grade. Playing games out in the grass during recess while *Boulevard of Broken Dreams* played on blast is one of my favorite memories from elementary school. Participating in the CVHS marching band as well, and having the opportunity to travel and compete was also a blessing that I’m sure not every school has the opportunity to do. FCPS provided me with many wonderful memories and for that I am grateful to you all.

I write this letter to you all not to reminisce about the great things offered to me by FCPS. Rather, I come to you with a suggestion, one that I believe will be easy to implement given how capable every single one of you is, as well as the teachers and staff at every school in Fairfax County. As you all know, FCPS places a heavy emphasis on challenging students in the core subjects of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. While I do agree that these subjects of study are necessary to correctly orient students and help them develop their ability to learn, something vital is missing from the curriculum. This subject was somehow overlooked despite possibly being the foundation of all knowledge. The designers of the general education curriculum at FCPS seem to have forgotten about philosophy.

The importance of philosophy cannot be stressed enough. The breadth of the subject itself encompasses nearly anything you could think of. Epistemology, logic, axiology, metaphysics, and more are all within the realm of philosophy. My request is specifically to add the philosophy of science as well as logic to the high school curriculum. The change would be seemingly easy to implement. Simply have teachers spend one or two classes discussing inductive and deductive reasoning, have students read or write about Hume’s or Goodman’s Problems of Induction, add Kuhn’s *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* as a required reading, as well as discuss falsificationism and the various objections to falsificationism.

Why do I specifically suggest these topics to high school students? The reason is because I know from experience that students are falling into the trap of believing that justification for their beliefs can only arrive from the scientific method. This itself may not be problematic to most, however if FCPS truly cares about correctly orienting students to becoming functioning members of society, capable of independent thought, then the students have a right to know about the limitations of science. Sitting in my Honors Biology, Chemistry, and Physics, all I learned about was how to write up an experiment, perform said experiment, and draw some conclusions using the pseudo statistics that we call the null hypothesis. I learned about how foolish the scientists of the past were for thinking things were a certain way, but the class never talked about how modern scientists themselves could be the fools to those in the future. By learning about induction, various philosophers’ problems with induction, the structure of scientific revolutions, as well as the evil that is falsificationism and objections to it, I believe students will understand that we as humans are truly limited in our knowledge, and that science is not capable of answering every question we may have.

I graduate from Temple University after seven semesters here, and in that time I have come to realize that many of my peers either do not know how to criticize an argument or are not capable of criticizing what some would call “mainstream knowledge” (and by that I mean science). Philosophy classes, especially epistemology, logic, and philosophy of science, are not required at all to graduate. I had to go out of my way to take some philosophy classes out of curiosity, not knowing they would change the way I thought about things significantly more than any general education classes ever could. If the goal of education is to orient people to the ability to form unique thoughts that could drive humanity forward, then no subject does it better than the one designed specifically for the purpose of thinking.

I implore those of you on the school board who truly care about the future of the students enrolled in your district to add just a few philosophy lessons to the curriculum. I hope this topic is brought up during the next school board meeting, for I know that teaching philosophy could be something very important to the students themselves, who otherwise would never know to think that the scientists they appeal to could be wrong. I am open to further correspondence regarding this topic, for I am an avid proponent of philosophy and I will continue to argue for it in our schools so long as I am a citizen of Fairfax County.

With all due respect, love, and gratefulness to the teachers and staff at FCPS who taught me and took care of me, and to the Board Members who took the time to read this letter,

Fahim Bashar