**PRESS RELEASE**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**STUDENTS SHOWCASE CODING SKILLS TO IMPROVE CITY SERVICES**

**BALTIMORE, MD, June 6, 2018** — On Thursday, May 24th five students from area high schools, participating in a collaboration between the City of Baltimore’s Department of General Services (DGS) and Code in the Schools presented projects using their newly acquired coding skills to improve city services. The City of Baltimore, through partnerships like this, is building a competitive local labor force and a pipeline for computational careers within city government. The collaboration culminated with a student showcase, allowing the students to present their code based solutions to the Department of General Services and other industry leaders.

“DGS is one of the most data-centric agencies. This means that we have a lot of information, and we need to make sure that we’re doing a good job at understanding and acting on that information,” said Steve Sharkey, Director of General Services.

He continued, “Students have been working on projects pertaining to improving business process efficiency with Python in projects such as understanding and interpreting data into easy-to-understand visualizations, dashboards, and automating tasks.”

During the pilot of this new partnership program, high school students built foundational computer science skills in Python (a computer coding language) through secondary education computer science courses at Code in the Schools, and are using these skills to work with the Department of General Services on real challenges. The two projects the students worked on are a DGS Twitter Bot and a DGS Mobile Facilities Maintenance Program Dashboard.

The presentations at the showcase exceeded expectations in both the poise and presentation skills of the students, as well as their command of relevant technical components of their projects. They were able to get meaningful advice and feedback from panelists while fielding wide-ranging questions from the rationale behind the choice of certain open source libraries and their ability to investigate the source code, to management of group dynamics.

One student, a freshman at Baltimore Polytechnic Institute in the Python track of the Code in the Schools Prodigy Program, was awarded the top prize, a summer internship with the Department of General Services. She will have the opportunity to continue to build and apply her computer science skills to real-world problems faced by the agency and help improve government efficiency and productivity.

Babila Lima, the Business Process Improvement Office Manager at DGS stated, “We are extremely excited to continue to invest in her skill set. I am confident she will be able to produce work products that we can incorporate and maintain. I don’t know how often that happens as a young high school student that you get an opportunity to provide direct operational value to a local government agency and build your portfolio so early in your professional career.”

The Department of General Services is committed to providing high quality and cost-effective support services to the citizens of Baltimore.

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