Dear GUSA Finance & Appropriations Committee,

I am writing on behalf of all Media Board organizations to express our general dissatisfaction with FY21 funding.

First, our organizations feel that the Committee unfairly expects them to function as businesses. As student clubs with access to benefits, media organizations have a right to be subsidized by the university and should not be expected to make a profit. A few of our organizations, namely The Hoya and The Georgetown Voice, make revenue from ad sales and fundraisers so as not to place a large financial burden on the Student Activities Fee. These efforts to increase revenue ought to be viewed as a courtesy to the student body rather than as a business venture.

Second, print media is integral to the majority of our organizations, and the Committee ought to fund our printing request—amounting to $84,859.91—in full. Again, I want to express that print media offers our members a learning experience that cannot be found anywhere else on campus. Creating a print publication teaches our students valuable skills in design and journalism, and the specific pressures of publishing and distributing print newspapers and magazines cannot be replicated in online media. In particular, for our literary, arts, and culture magazines, the final printed product is a piece of artwork in and of itself, and the visual art and design of a print magazine does not translate well to online formats. Defunding print media would result in a loss of not only our journalistic practices and traditions but also our arts and cultural communities that revolve around the production of a collective tangible product.

Print media is vital to the visibility of our organizations. Many students first learn of our clubs through the magazines and newspapers we distribute across campus. For our smaller organizations, such as Bossier and The Anthem, the sustainability and growth of their communities are tangent upon the physical space they occupy on campus. Physical newspapers and magazines build readership, forge community, and make disparate groups and students visible to one another.

Our request for funding print media in full is entirely within reason. Each of our printing contracts falls under the least expensive plan offered by our publishers. In other words, printing contracts are “all or nothing” deals for our clubs. As conveyed in our previous presentation, our organizations prioritize printing contracts above all other budget items and will not simply substitute print media for online media. Attempting to “defund” print media will only result in the stagnation and stunting of campus media at large. Print media is not dying—as evidenced by the sustained presence of newspapers and magazines around the world—but campus media will suffer a slow death if not given adequate support from the university.

Third, with the proposed budget cuts in the initial budget summit report, our organizations will not be able to expand their multimedia presence whatsoever. Rebuilding our infrastructure with a stronger online presence is a top priority for Media Board. Last year, our media organizations were unable to purchase the equipment and online services they requested due to FY20 budget restraints. We ask that the Committee honor their commitment to funding our equipment and online services—amounting to $26,839.03—in full so that we can invest in the long-term devices and services we require.

Fourth, cutting 40.92% of our requested budget would be detrimental to the success of our newer clubs—namely Prospect Records, GUCCI, and Blaxa Media Group. New media organizations require a substantial amount of funding in order to build infrastructure, recruit new members, and host original programming. Media Board is committed to working with our new clubs to ensure future success; however, the proposed FY21 budgets will significantly hinder our ability to give our new groups the financial support they deserve since our first priority is to fund our established printing contracts.

In general, our organizations view the Committee’s decision to decrease funding by nearly 17% compared to FY20 as an overall devaluation of student journalism, news, scholarship, and art and as an expression of mistrust in Media Board. I hope this is not the case. Many of our organizations have served the Georgetown community for over 50 years—The Hoya alone has served our community for over 100—and all of our content production and fundraising is invested back into the community. Historically, Media Board has handled its funding with the utmost care and consideration. Our audit shows that for the past three years, we have not overspent our budget—a testament to the fact that we are prudent and intentional with our expenditures. Also, I want to stress that our advisory board has taken great strides to improve itself. In the past year alone, Media Board has bolstered its leadership by creating new positions, maintained a perfect attendance record for all CAB and NCD meetings, ratified a new charter, and restructured its internal budget summit proceedings as outlined in our “Budget Summit FY21 Guide” to allow for a more democratic allocation process. By revamping Media Board, we have brought our media organizations together to create a more cohesive unit. Together, we urge the Committee to reconsider our FY21 application and fulfill the requests outlined in this letter.

Sincerely,

Courtney Lee

*Chair of Media Board*