Intellectual Merit Criterion

Overall Assessment of Intellectual Merit
Very Good

Explanation to Applicant
The applicant's academic record, as described solely by her transcripts, place her as average with respect to the applicant pool. However, reference comments suggest a much stronger academic ability. Given the ongoing graduate work not reflected in transcripts, the current reference comments are important in moving the applicant to a higher level. her undergraduate academic record is also supplemented by many awards that sh won, as well as multiple research projects she has engaged with - both as an undergrad as well as two years at the Board of Governors. Her proposed research begins conventionally as a standard program evaluation of a voucher program aimed at reducing food insecurity. However, it is the proposed addition to a this of a randomized control trial that makes this a more valuable research exercise with potentially important results, as echoed also by a reference.

Broader Impacts Criterion

Overall Assessment of Broader Impacts
Excellent

Explanation to Applicant
The applicant is exceptionally strong with respect to the broader impact category. From her family background story, through the organizations and groups she worked with as an undergrad, she demonstrates a drive to help reduce disparities among subpopulations, with a special concern for the Latino community. Her references recognize this as well, and speak of it as having helped her focus in on issues. her research proposal relating to better understanding mechanisms that might impact food insecurity is just another example where she might be able to inform broader social policy.

Summary Comments
References, and transcripts, suggest the applicant is on track to be successful academically at the University of Maryland. Her interests suggest she will be able to produce research that will affect the wider public.

Intellectual Merit Criterion

Overall Assessment of Intellectual Merit
Excellent

Explanation to Applicant
This applicant displays outstanding preparation. They were a high achiever as an undergraduate, receiving a 3.79 in mathematical economics at Gettysburg, despite overcoming a number of personal obstacles during school. They went on to publish their senior honors thesis in a refereed journal. Their letters of recommendation are excellent, underscoring the notion that the applicant is poised to have a transformative impact on the field. Their proposed area of research is both important, but also very well-motivated and very clearly laid out. The applicant identifies a number of approaches to the topic, and clearly articulates the added value the research is poised to make.

Broader Impacts Criterion

Overall Assessment of Broader Impacts
Excellent

Explanation to Applicant

This applicant demonstrates a profound understanding of inequality born out of personal experience. As their letters of recommendation attest, this experience will contribute to the diversification of views in the economic profession. The applicant has strong evidence of a commitment to promoting the societal impact of her research and her career, as she is already active in a number of initiatives along these lines, as described in her personal statement. In sum, this applicant goes far beyond the standard applicant's cursory explanation that their research area is societally relevant, to identify the specific ways in which they are actively promoting the societal impact of their research and work.

Summary Comments

This is a highly competitive application from an applicant that demonstrates exceptional preparation, prior achievement, maturity, and leadership with respect to both intellectual merit and broader impacts. In particular, on balance, this application stands at a level on its own with respect to broader impacts compared to even the next most highly competitive group of applications.