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Remarks at the 2017 Hooding Ceremony

Calvin G. Butler Jr.

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Calvin G. Butler Jr.
Chief Executive Officer

**Remarks of Calvin G. Butler Jr.
University of Maryland
Francis King Carey School of Law
Hooding Ceremony
Hippodrome Theatre, Baltimore, Maryland
May 19, 2017**

Good afternoon graduates, families and friends.

Thank you Dean Tobin and Faculty for the invitation to be here with you today and for the very generous introduction. It is truly an honor to share this momentous occasion with you and the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law.

I need to be honest, it's surreal to be here giving the key note at your graduation. For the longest time, I did not think that I would make it to mine. That's a story for another day.

As Dean Tobin mentioned, I recently called on him to address my team at BGE on the topic of implicit bias, (*he was very modest in his description of his talk*) he delivered a fascinating and enlightening 90-minute lecture that had many on my team wanting to take the LSAT's and apply to law school just to learn more about the topic of implicit bias and much more! You are truly blessed to be led by such a respected and engaging scholar.

When I invited Dean Tobin to speak, I asked him to be detailed and thorough. When he asked me to speak, he suggested that I keep it brief.

So I will do that!



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I can remember well the exhilaration you're feeling right now. If you're anything like me, there must have been moments when you wondered if you would make it to this point! But you did! You made it!

You should be proud. I'm proud of you too. Looking out at all of the smiling faces, I know your family and friends and professors are wishing the best for you and your promising futures!

There will be many times as you make your way through the world that you will remember some good advice from those close to you who guided, inspired and supported you, and I know you will say a silent thank you. But I encourage you, throughout your journey to continue to applaud them.

You are graduating from a venerable institution. And I lead a venerable company that's nearly 201 years old, and it's not often that I get to salute an organization with more history than mine. The authorization for this school came three years before my company was founded. To put that in perspective, even this grand 103-year-old Hippodrome Theater wouldn't be built until more than a century after the founding of this school.

In all that time many remarkable people have graduated from this school with titles ranging from Mayor to Governor to Congressman to Senator. Attorneys General, Circuit, District and Appellate Court Judges, Chief Executive Officers, Managing Partners and General Counsels.

And so, we come to you now. Each of you has earned this moment. You worked extremely hard. You each possess a wealth of knowledge. And that is



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something very powerful. It can lead to all of the impressive titles I just named and financial success. I hope it does for each of you and I know it will.

But your true measure will never be through titles or wealth.

Rather, it will be how you harness your power and the knowledge you've earned to effect positive change. I will discuss this issue of effecting positive change by focusing on harnessing your power, urging you to be ready, encouraging you to take calculated risks, stressing the importance of building a powerful network and reminding you that it's not about you.

What I love about joining you here on your graduation day is that I simply get to reinforce a lesson that you have learned each and every day at Maryland Carey Law. This is an esteemed institution not because it's one of the oldest law schools in the nation or because of its impressive list of alumni.

No. It is this institution's commitment to public service...to our community...to harnessing the power of the law to effect positive change...that set you apart.

Through the clinical law program and the Cardin requirement you provide more than 75,000 hours of free legal services to the surrounding community. That is outstanding and deserves to be recognized again.

That is a commitment that is near and dear to my heart. My own legal team at Exelon was singled out nationally this year by the pro bono institute for this outstanding work in providing legal counsel to those in need in Maryland and throughout the country.



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Through your service, you learned by doing. And by doing, you've created real change, not only the lives of those you've helped directly but through your advocacy.

You have been a driving force behind the coalition to reform the money bail system that has essentially linked a person's liberties to the size of their bank account. *YOU HARNESSSED YOUR POWER!*

And your impact has gone far beyond that, from helping those touched by gender violence, discrimination, and challenges with immigration, limited income, healthcare, and educational system inequities.

It's clear that this school has looked at the challenges we're facing and rather than feeling overwhelmed, you've said "We've got this. We can make a difference."

You are already harnessing the power to effect positive change. My role today is simply to ask you to remember this lesson. Carry it forward. Expand on it as you gain more and more opportunities. As life sets in, families grow, and your commitments grow. Keep asking yourself, "How will I make society better? Am I lifting others up?"

I know the opportunities will continue to come your way and the advice I often give to people in your place in life: be ready.

Some of you have been preparing for this day your whole lives. I bet that a few of you can attest from the time you were first able to talk, your parents and teachers said "that kid's going to be a lawyer someday." Might not have been meant as a compliment...but own it anyway.



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I'm guessing that there are an equal number of you who couldn't have envisioned being here today or whose parents, teachers and friends NEVER thought *YOU'D* be an officer of the court. Own it.

Whether you planned it or not, here we are none the less. I can tell you that my original plan didn't involve the letters J.D. or CEO but rather CF. I was sure I was going to be the starting center fielder of my hometown St. Louis Cardinals. I was pretty good. It's just that I ran into pitchers with curve balls that – let's just say, I realized there were many other vocations to be explored.

Immediately, I started preparing myself to *BE READY* for opportunities when they presented themselves. That meant challenging me in new ways and committing to a mindset that when a door opens for you, you should always walk through it.

I was the first person in my family to attend college, and then like you, on to law school. After graduating, I took the corporate path, starting my career at a utility-holding company in Illinois. You might think that created a direct line to where I am today. Except that from utilities, I joined a large manufacturing company in Chicago. After the first couple of years as their lobbyist, company leadership asked me if I was interested in learning manufacturing. A door opened. I challenged myself.

I went from lunches and dinner with delegates, congressman, senators, and playing golf at the finest clubs to a second shift bindery operator on a manufacturing floor. The key was my legal education. The process of earning my J.D. provided a level of confidence in my ability to learn, think critically, process



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large sums of information and distill it into relevant facts. Bottom Line: I WAS READY! I trained there for six months. Two years later I came back to that plant as V.P. of Manufacturing: responsible for the day-to-day operations of the plant and its 650 employees.

My educational training provided me the confidence to take that calculated risk. Taking that risk led me all the way to becoming the Senior Vice President of External Affairs at the manufacturing company, before I was recruited by Exelon. Even then, I could not have imagined that would have led to becoming Chief Executive of the first gas utility company in the United States, Baltimore Gas and Electric Company. Looking back, every step, even every misstep, prepared me for today.

So I challenge you to become comfortable with the unknown. Especially those of you who always knew you would be here today and those of you who think you know what your next 20, 30, 40 years will look like.

You absolutely NEVER know where an opportunity can take you. And you'll NEVER find out if you don't take calculated risks.

But always remember, you're not in this alone. Remember those folks we applauded earlier? I know I saw some group selfies being taken earlier and you'll be taking more later. That's part of your support system that makes it possible for you to see challenges as opportunities and take steps in directions you might not be entirely sure about.

Build your own network. Nurture it. Surround yourself with good people. At BGE I'm very fortunate to have a smart, efficient, first-rate team working with me



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to fulfill our mission. When we are most effective, when we're really hitting on all cylinders, it's always when we're operating as a cross-functional, diverse, unified team with a common purpose. It works even better when we reach outside the boundaries of our company and expand our team to include community partners, leaders and allies. Remember that I reached out to Dean Tobin when I was working with my team on strengthening the diversity and inclusiveness of our organization. I needed his help and expertise. He helped make us stronger.

So as you embark on your careers, I want you to make it a point to reach out to others. Meet the smart people in other areas of your organizations and communities and learn what you can from them. Remember – you are also building yourself. Think of yourself as a work in progress, someone who is always on a journey to learn. Express an interest in other areas of operations. Learn how to speak the language of whatever field you choose, so that you can fully express your ideas and demonstrate your value as a partner and strategic thinker. The best lawyers and business people figure out the *how* and don't settle on the easy *no*.

So, as soon as you settle in to your new careers, I encourage you to quickly build your network inside and outside your organization. Stretch yourself to become a part of your community. Start identifying and building your personal team of people who can make you the best you can be.

Make sure you connect and maintain relationships with these motivators and truth-tellers. And in turn, you should be that person for others.

Because, keep in mind – it's not all about you. You've worked hard and earned this. In return you will have many benefits that others may not be able to



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access. As you building yourself, you can also help build others. Put yourself in a position to help. Make yourself accessible to people from all walks of life, and do something that is truly meaningful to their lives. There is a tremendous amount of need in the world. You'll find lasting rewards in giving of your time and resources to those less fortunate.

I began my remarks with “you made it.” You are already a success. I want you to remember the hard time you experienced on the way here – the struggles to complete assignments, the financial challenges, the stresses from your personal life, the doubts from others and maybe even doubts within yourself. Remember above all is that you did not let any of those things hold you back. Whenever you face the challenges that will come your way, at those times, you must say to yourself – “I already know that I can do this.”

Thank you for allowing me to share your special day and I encourage you to let your dreams lead the way. And whichever way they take you, I sincerely hope they will lead to our paths crossing again.

Let me leave you with some words from Grammy recording artist and my former Pastor Smokie Norful from one of my favorite songs “Once in a Lifetime” (and I paraphrase):

“As a little boy, I use to dream of the big stage, couldn’t wait to see my name in lights. I had a dream so big, made mountains look small; I couldn’t wait until I had it all. The closer I get, the more distant I feel. The more I thought I had the less it seemed real. I used to think it was about the trophies



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on my wall. If I won, I would have it all. I couldn't wait until everyone knew my name. I had my own definition of fame."

Ladies and gentleman: It came later in life but I define my success by harnessing my power to make a meaningful impact on this world.

So, 2017 University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law graduates, we are counting on you. We need you to:

- Harness your power;
- Be ready;
- Take calculated risks;
- Build and become part of a power network;
- And remember, it's not about you!

Thank you and God bless.