

Brian L. Ford

Congressional Hearing on DC Tuition Assistance Grant program

Good morning Chairman Davis and members of this distinguished committee. Thank you for allowing me to come and speak to you. My name is Brian L. Ford and I am a former recipient of the DC Tuition Assistance Grant program.

Born and raised in Washington, DC, I have experienced firsthand the constant struggle to survive the dangerous streets while my family struggled to stay above the poverty line. Being able to afford college seemed far-fetched growing up in Southeast DC. However, I am a goal-oriented person, and I did not let these things deter me from achieving my goal. I knew by the grace of God and support of family, friends, and others that I would find a way to pay for school.

In 1998, I graduated from Eastern Senior High School here in the District and I decided to attend the University of Delaware where I majored in Political Science. At Delaware, I received financial aid to assist me in paying for school. However, it was not enough. The first two years, my parents had to contribute almost \$3000 to help me pay for school, which was a lot for my parents at the time. I had two sisters and a nephew for whom my parents were still providing.

In 2000, my junior year in college, I applied for and was awarded a DC Tuition Assistance Grant. For the first time since I started college, my parents did not have to pay anything out of their pockets for me to attend school. With DC Tuition Assistance Grant, along with other financial aid, I was able to have my tuition paid in full. I was

able to focus fully on obtaining a college degree and not worry if my bill would be paid. My grades improved to the point where I made the Dean's List twice and earned a 3.0 GPA by graduation.

I graduated in May 2002 from the University of Delaware with a Bachelors of Arts degree in Political Science. That day was a very special day for my family and me. My family was proud to witness one of their own graduating from college. I was proud of myself for accomplishing my goal and thanked everyone who made that day possible.

Currently, I am a Financial Aid Counselor at Trinity College in Washington, DC where I advise students about financial aid and encourage DC students to apply for grants like DC Tuition Assistance Grant. We serve a significant population of DC residents who demonstrate a very high level of financial need. Some of these students are struggling to stay in school, and the DC Tuition Assistance Grant assists students to continue in school while in some cases borrowing less in student loans. Many DC residents at Trinity College are not currently able to benefit from this program, and I hope that some issues can be addressed in the reauthorization process to allow all DC residents to be eligible.

In conclusion, I want to give a special thanks to Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton and this committee for developing this program. I hope that you will agree with me that the DC Tuition Assistance Grant program is a necessity for the city of Washington, DC and for its residents. I urge you to please continue to provide financial support to the DC Tuition Assistance Grant program so one day students like myself can have a college diploma hanging on the wall for the world to see.

Thank you.

