

REAUTHORIZATION OF THE DC COLLEGE ACCESS ACT OF 1999

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Argelia Rodriguez, Executive Director for the DC College Access Program

Good Morning. My name is Argelia Rodriguez and I am the Executive Director of the District of Columbia College Access Program, or as it is more commonly known, DC-CAP. I am delighted to have been asked by the Committee on Government Reform to speak to you today about the importance of the reauthorization of the DC College Access Act.

Let me begin by thanking the members of Congress who have championed this program from the beginning and who secured passage of what may be the single most important and successful education initiative in the history of the District of Columbia.

In particular, I'd like to acknowledge you, Chairman Davis, and you, Delegate Norton, for your extraordinary efforts to transform a good idea into an Act of Congress. The DC College Access Act was born here in the House of Representatives, and we're grateful for the leadership of Congressmen Istook, Knollenberg, Frelinghuysen and Fattah of the House Appropriations Committee for ensuring that the Act was fully funded from the start.

Indeed, the DC College Access Act has enjoyed not only bipartisan support but unanimous support in these first five years, in both the House and the Senate, where Senators Voinovich, DeWine, Durbin and Landrieu have been particularly helpful in securing passage and funding of this landmark program.

DC College Access was seen from the start as a partnership between government and the private sector. The government agreed to pay the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition for DC students attending college beyond the borders of the District of Columbia, and the business and philanthropic communities in this area agreed to provide the resources needed to launch and operate an unprecedented counseling, college admission and retention program for the students of DC public high schools. **The DC College Access Program** represents the fulfillment of this agreement and the private sector's substantial and long term commitment to increasing DC student college access.

DC-CAP has recruited, trained and put to work full-time, school-based DC-CAP advisors in all 18 DC public high schools. We provide direct college counseling services to more than 12,000 public high school students and their families, starting in 9th grade. We start by telling these students that college is not an impossible dream, and that thanks to you and this remarkable legislation-- they can go to college if they get the right preparation in high school.

As the high school years unfold, we make sure these students are taking the courses they need to gain admission to college. We assist them with their college applications. We help secure financial aid and scholarships from public and private sources. And if there is still a financial need, DC-CAP will provide them with up to \$2,000 a year in last-dollar scholarship assistance to make sure they can pay all the expenses associated with a college education.

