

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee,

It is an honor for me to have an opportunity to address you this morning on behalf Hiram College and the Student Aid Alliance. While I am here today to talk to you about the importance of financial aid in my life, I also represent the hopes and dreams of all students of Hiram College, and those of my hometown, Canton, Ohio.

I was fortunate to grow up in a city which serves as home of the Professional Football Hall of Fame and in Stark County, an area well known for the quality of its hard working, blue collar citizens. At Canton Timken High School, I did my best to represent the values taught to me by my father, Stephen, and my late mother, Linda, who I lost almost exactly 12 months ago during the heart of my college search. At Timken High School, I contributed to the community as Senior Class President, Student Council President, and as a member of the newspaper staff, the football and baseball teams, and as the school's representative to Buckeye Boys State. I was also active in community service and Habitat for Humanity programs, experiences which taught me the importance of civic duty. For these activities, I was inducted into the National Honor Society.

I have great pride in all that I accomplished in high school. But the achievement that I am most proud of is that I am a college student, fulfilling a dream which my family and I have had for many years. I'm quite aware of the many sacrifices my parents have made to make it possible for me and my older brother to attend college. For 25 years my father worked long hours for a printing company before the company was purchased and he was laid off. Since then he has found work on the food service staff at Canton's Aultman Hospital. Before her premature death, my mother worked many jobs in banking and real estate in order to obtain the resources necessary for me to pursue a college education.

I chose Hiram College because the environment and the people appealed to me. The faculty, staff, and students are friendly, smart, and care for me and one another. Hiram's liberal arts environment nurtures my many interests. I'm encouraged to be engaged in my education through activities outside the classroom. Simply put, I made the right college choice for me. It is a good fit.

Despite my strong affinity for Hiram College and the extraordinary sacrifices made by my family, I would not be able to pursue my undergraduate education without the assistance provided by the federal government, the state, and the College. My financial aid package includes a Federal Pell Grant, Federal SEOG, Federal Work Study, the Ohio Instructional Grant, the Ohio Choice Grant, as well as a scholarship from the Ohio Foundation of Independent Colleges, and gift assistance from Hiram College. I also obtained a loan from the Federal Stafford Loan Program.

I'm grateful beyond words for these many forms of assistance. I take seriously my responsibility to take full advantage of the opportunities for education made possible by financial aid support. I speak on behalf of my family in saying that I would not be able to pursue a college education without the generous support provided through the federal and state programs.

I am not alone. While Hiram is respected as one of the nation's most prestigious liberal arts institutions and carries a price tag exceeding \$25,000 for tuition, room, board, and fees, most of my classmates come from families much like mine, with family incomes below \$60,000. It has not always been the case, but I've also come to learn that it costs the college more to educate a student than it charges in tuition, room, and board. I was pleased to learn in December that my institution was locking in those charges for future students with the implementation of the Hiram College Tuition Guarantee, while making sure that current students were not adversely affected. It is exactly the kind of concern for students and families which I've come to expect in our intimate learning environment.

With continued support, I will graduate in four years. As an early childhood education major, I plan to pursue a teaching career. Working with children, perhaps even in my hometown, appeals to me greatly. I want very much to make a difference in the lives of young people. I want to open doors for students, much like those who have come before me have opened doors. I am a believer in the transformative power of education and seek to enhance my corner of the world one student at a time.

Your continued support of financial aid programs is not only appreciated, but most necessary. Our state needs educated citizens to prosper. For many students like me, the golden key to earning a college education is often the assistance provided by these federal and state programs. Thank you for all that you can do to support these critical programs.

My mother passed before I entered Hiram College. She was very high on Hiram and would be pleased to know of my final college choice. I'm confident that she will be with me in May of 2007 when our dream is fulfilled and I walk across the stage to receive my diploma.

Thank you for your kind attention and for this opportunity.