

TESTIMONY OF LESLY ALVAREZ

House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

Subcommittee on Health Care, District of Columbia,

Census and the National Archives

MARCH 1, 2011

Hello, Chairman Gowdy, Ranking Member Davis and Members of the Committee. Thank you for inviting me to tell my story today.

My name is Lesly Alvarez. I am an eighth grade Opportunity Scholarship student. I live at home with my mother, father, and brother. At home, we speak Spanish and English. English is my second language; I learned it while attending Sacred Heart School. Both languages are taught at Sacred Heart because it is a bilingual school. In fact, it is the only bilingual Catholic school in all of D.C.

Sacred Heart is a very special and unique place. My classmates and I represent a lot of different countries, for example: El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Cameroon, the Caribbean Islands and Vietnam and we come from different religious backgrounds. There are Catholic and Buddhist students and there are Protestant students like me! The common thread between us all is that we are all learning to be responsible citizens of our school community and the greater community. My teachers are very proud of me for testifying on behalf of our school community today.

I am very involved in my school. A minimum of 20 hours of community service is needed in order to graduate 8th grade. I only have two hours left! My favorite subject in school is Language Arts, I love it so much because there is reading involved. The main reason why Language Arts is my favorite subject is because there is reading involved. I am able to grasp the material quickly and connect stories to my life.

I am definitely planning on attending college in my future. I am sure that I want to make something out of my life and be successful. I am interested in studying law. I think I would be a

good lawyer because I am a persuasive arguer and fight for what I believe in. The main reason why I find interest in law is because I like defending people and I stand up for justice.

One of my favorite books is *En Busca de Milagros*, in English this translates as “In Search of Miracles”. I am reading this book right now in my Spanish class. It is so powerful and has changed the way I looked at my life and my future.

I connect with the main character, Milly, short for Milagros, in a couple of ways. The first way is that we are both searching for something. Being an adopted child, Milly is searching for knowledge of her past. Being an Opportunity Scholar, I am searching for knowledge for my future. The Opportunity Scholarship Program has been a miracle for me and hundreds of other students just like me. Milly wants to know where she comes from. I want to know where I’m going. With my scholarship, I know I will go far.

Milly and I have one more thing in common: we are young and a lot of people tell us that we are too young to overcome the obstacles set in front of us. Milly’s successful story showed me that I should just keep working to get through the obstacles. I know I cannot change the minds of the adults who doubt the value of the Opportunity Scholarship Program. But like Milly, I know that I need to work hard every day to overcome my obstacles and demonstrate the value of my scholarship so that more kids like me can receive it too. So I am working really hard for what I want and deserve: knowledge and an opportunity for the successful future I dream of.

There are a couple of ways that Milly and I are different. First, Milly finds only two adults who help support her on her journey. I have more than two people helping me. I have my parents and teachers. I know that Cardinal Wuerl is supportive of me and there are many members of Congress, like Speaker Boehner and Senator Lieberman, who support me in this program.

The second way we are different is that it took Milly until the middle of her story to learn she could not control the world around her and that she just needed to take control of her actions and be really dedicated to get her miracle. In my case, I feel like I am still in the beginning of my life story. I still have a lot of years of education ahead of me in order to achieve my dreams. But, unlike Milly I will not wait to take control of my actions until later. I am taking control by testifying today.

Milly's miracle comes to her because eventually her work leads her to learn about her past. The miracle that I am searching for today is that the Opportunity Scholarship Program be reauthorized. I know other kids will enjoy their scholarship as much as I have.

My name is Lesly Alvarez and I am en busca de un milagro.

Thank you.

Lesly M. Alvarez

Lesly Alvarez

BIO

Lesly is an 8th grade student at Sacred Heart School. The D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program allows her family to choose where she attends school to get the best education possible. Every child should get the chance to go to a good school.

Sacred Heart School is a bilingual school. Sacred Heart School gives her the chance to pursue all kind of new activities in addition to her school work. At Sacred Heart School the teachers really care about each student and provide a safe environment for learning where the academics are taken seriously.

Lesly loves her school and is excited about pursuing her dreams of becoming a lawyer. She also enjoys cooking and would love to attend a culinary school and become a chef.

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
Witness Disclosure Requirement – “Truth in Testimony”
Required by House Rule XI, Clause 2(g)(5)

Name: Lesly Alvarez

1. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) you have received since October 1, 2008. Include the source and amount of each grant or contract.

N/A

2. Please list any entity you are testifying on behalf of and briefly describe your relationship with these entities.

N/A

3. Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) received since October 1, 2008, by the entity(ies) you listed above. Include the source and amount of each grant or contract.

N/A

I certify that the above information is true and correct.

Signature:

Lesly Alvarez

Date: 2-25-11