

TESTIMONY OF RONALD HOLASSIE

House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on Health Care, District of Columbia, Census and the National Archives

MARCH 1, 2011

Chairman Gowdy and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

My name is Ronald Holassie. I have served as D.C.'s Deputy Youth Mayor for Legislation for two years and I am now a senior at Archbishop Carroll High School.

My journey with the Washington, D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program began six years ago when I was 13. I was raised in a single parent household with my mother and younger brother. I faced many challenges in the public school system. I attended various D.C. public schools during elementary school. Altercations with other students and a lack of academic achievement resulted in me switching to different schools around D.C. But it seemed that I was faced with the same problems at each new school.

Then one day my mother saw an ad for the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program. She quickly applied, and soon after I was accepted and given a scholarship to attend any private school of our choice in D.C. My mother now had a chance to send me to a school she knew would fit me best. The scholarship covered tuition, books and my uniform. My mother saw it as a blessing and an answer of prayer from God for her child. She always wanted me to have a quality education.

When I received my scholarship, I was so far behind that the school asked me to repeat the sixth grade. The first few months were very different as the expectations and standards were much higher. The discipline in the school was also much stricter. Adjusting

to the new school wasn't easy; it took time. I had to catch up and get on the academic level I needed to be on and fulfill the expectations of the new school. But it all didn't happen that fast. It took some years and hard work and dedication. There was a transition stage that I had to undergo. It took some time to adjust to the new standards and expectations but I soon adjusted well.

When I entered High school I was quite nervous and didn't really know what to expect. Being at Archbishop Carroll High School shaped me academically...shaped me to perform academically with my greatest potential. As I am now a senior at Archbishop Carroll High School finishing up my last year, I am ready to take on the world and new opportunities. I credit the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program for my success.

This program has worked, is still working, and will continue to work. It is a must to reauthorize the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program. Everyone deserves a choice and should have the right of school choice and opportunity. As I said before unto the United States Senate "public schools did not get bad overnight and they're not going to get better overnight. So we need to take action now and have a program installed to give children a quality education such as the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program. Reauthorization of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program is critical. We should always have options and this program is an option for parents and students.

Looking back I can see throughout the past years I have evolved so much and at the same time dealt with many obstacles. As a young child many challenges came before me in which I had to undergo hardships and persevere. Through all the pain, suffering, and tears, I am still standing. Not just standing but standing strong ready to take on the world and achieve much more. As a young man, I see a future ahead of me and a vision of a successful life. I feel as if all these years served as preparation for the real world. I am now confident that I can go out into the world and make something out of my life, and that I will not only impact people here in the United States but around the world.

I made it this far and nothing can stop me now from succeeding. Not a single voice or action of opposition can stop my success nor the success of thousands of children who

have the opportunity to choose a school that is best for them.

It's not just about me and my story as I am a senior now... months away from graduating. I am here for not only myself and the students currently enrolled in the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program, but the thousands of children who have not been given the same opportunity.

I am here to fight for quality education and have the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program reauthorized as it needs to be. I am a product of this program, a successful result. The DC Opportunity Scholarship Program has provided the education that has shaped me into being the intelligent, ambitious, person that is in front of you now. The results of the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program are certainly life-changing. Now being a young adult, taking on my own responsibilities, I have certainly been greatly influenced by this program. I can look back and credit this program for my success.

"It's not just what this program does academically, but it is how it impacts an individual's life through education"

Thank you.

Ronald Holassie

BIO

Ronald Holassie is a senior at Archbishop Carroll High School and a D.C. Opportunity Scholarship recipient.

When he was in 6th grade, his mother was extremely concerned because he was coming home with no homework and poor grades. She was on the verge of sending him to her home country of Trinidad to go to school. He received the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship and his mother was very excited because it allowed him to receive a quality education in a school she chose for him.

In 2009-2010, he served as Deputy Youth Mayor for Legislative Affairs in the District of Columbia. In that position he focused on important issues such as education, summer programs, and job opportunities.

His passion for music was inspired by the D.C. OSP. The advanced level of reading and writing in private school helped him learn to write lyrics. He then discovered his voice in a music class at Carroll and began singing. As a student at Archbishop Carroll High School, he runs track, enjoys physics and writes R&B music.

As he comes to the final months of high school and the beginning of a new chapter in his life as he prepares for college, he sees a bright future ahead and a vision of a successful life.

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

Name: Ronald Holassie

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: Ronald Holassie

Date: 2/24/2011