

Ohio House of Representatives
Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education
HB 166
Testimony of Yasmin Bono, Graduate
Fortis College, Columbus Campus
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Chairman Carfagna, Ranking Member Miller, and members of the Subcommittee. My name is Yasmin Bono. First, I would like to tell you my personal story, so you can see that, without the flexibility and personal attention of Fortis College, I would have become an RN and helped fill the need for skilled health care workers. I will also tell you how OCOG made it possible for me to pay for that hard-earned degree.

I was born and raised in Somalia and came to North America when I was 9 years old, not speaking a word of English. I was blessed to have been educated but not in the language of this country.

My mother was a nurse, and at the time, being a young adult and having your mother as a nurse, it was just natural to not want to do what she was doing. When I was 20, I started taking classes at a college in Michigan, not really sure of my future.

After doing some research, my mother came across Fortis College, in Columbus. She suggested it was where I could get an LPN in a year and at least give nursing a try. I moved to Ohio one week before classes started.

That was 2010, and I did finish the program and graduate. My family had started a home health agency, so I began working there as an office manager. I was happy with my job and enjoyed working with my family, but every day I kept thinking about furthering my education and going back to do my RN, but I never acted on it. Forward a few years to 2015, when I got married. Following the birth of my son in 2016, I got seriously about my nursing career.

I enrolled in Fortis College's RN program when my son was 6 months old. I enrolled him in daycare, and because my job was a family-owned business, I was blessed to be able to be at home with him when I wasn't at school.

I worked full time and then part time during most of the early terms. The classes got tougher and I needed to study more. I would drop my son off at around 9 a.m., then go straight to the school library. Whether I had classes or not I would be there studying. If I was not in the library, I was in one of the unoccupied classrooms because they were quiet and empty. If I had a class that day I would go home after class, which meant my son would already be sleeping. If I had a test that week I would stay longer because I knew once I got home, I was on full mommy mode. Some nights I would only sleep for 3 hours, but that is what entails of being a mother and a student.

A lot of people sacrificed so much for me to get this RN degree, including my new family at Fortis College, so I was not willing to disappoint them. All the staff was there for me day and night, whether they answered my questions, helped me understand things, opened labs so I can get extra practice, or tutored me during their free time. The school offered boot camps on the weekends for different classes which help us better prepare for our specialty exams and the NCLEX, the nationwide examination for the licensing of nurses in the U.S. and Canada. Fortis was the perfect school for me because it accommodated my needs. I could not have done this without their help along with my entire family. I have been blessed enough to have an amazing team on my side.

Now turning to why the Ohio College Opportunity Grant is important to me. I used the Pell Grant and loans to pay for most of my education, which totaled about \$36,000. My OCOG amount was only \$1,691, but I'm grateful that it helped reduce the total out-of-pocket cost and was a grant -- not a loan with interest.

Since earning my RN degree, I've taken on more responsibilities in the Bono/Sanctuary Home Health Care, in Columbus, where we provide a range of nursing care, including for people with developmental disabilities. I also work in a local hospital. I'm excited that my nursing career has taken off, and my long-term goal is to become a Nurse Practitioner.

I urge you to make sure OCOG is there for other students like me with non-traditional backgrounds, who are willing to make sacrifices to get good jobs and support their families. Thank you for listening to my story.