

House Finance Higher Education Subcommittee
Testimony on Lorain County Community College's SAIL Program
April 9, 2019

Chairman Carfagna, Ranking Member Sweeney and members of the House Finance Higher Education Subcommittee, I am LePreece Thomas of Lorain, Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today to share my story with you on Lorain County Community College's SAIL program.

I am a Project Coordinator for Cryogenics and Operations Management at Mainthia Technologies at NASA. I have achieved that goal because of Lorain County Community College and the SAIL program.

After 25 years of corporate office work, I decided to fulfill a lifelong dream of going back to school to earn a degree in mechanical engineering. I initially caught the "engineering bug" years ago while taking my daughter to the NASA Pipeline summer camps.

So about 10-12 years later I decided it was time to make the jump and focus on getting a degree in mechanical engineering. I began courses in 2015 and heard about the SAIL program in my SDEV class when the coordinator Matt Mercado came in to tell us about this opportunity.

I thought, 'Wow if I could get help with tuition that would be great!' I took the time to do the SAIL survey and application online. When the last screen said, 'You're In,' I was so excited. It was like a weight off my shoulders.

It was amazing to know something like this program existed. And the entire staff that I worked with, most importantly Cynthia Arredondo, is so dedicated and

helpful...and calm. I was still working and going to school in my free time and had four kids at home. Then in the last few years my father passed away and I had my gall bladder removed and it was very stressful. Cynthia was so calm and helpful.

I was very nervous before I started. It's hard to explain how truly apprehensive – as a 47-year-old – I was when I decided to go back to school. It had been many years since I was in school and that added to my stress.

However, with the help of the SAIL program, all I had to worry about was making my grades. The SAIL staff at LCCC gave me all of the help, direction and support I needed so that I never felt lost.

I'm so grateful for everyone at LCCC for telling us about this program. I now have a brand new, exciting career to show for it.

Because of the SAIL program I earned my associate of arts degree, as well as an associate of applied science degree, a one-year technical certificate and a short-term technical certificate in manufacturing engineering technology from Lorain County Community College. I was able to get an internship at Mainthia Technologies, which turned into a full-time engineering job after graduation.

Once again, thank you for the chance to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.