

**Ohio Senate  
Finance – Higher Education Subcommittee  
HB 64**

***Testimony of Ashley Wyatt  
Student, Harrison College – Columbus  
May 20, 2015***

Thank you, Chairman Gardner, Vice Chair Cafaro and members of the Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education. My name is Ashley Wyatt and I am a student at the Harrison College – Columbus campus. I have completed my Associate of Applied Science Degree in Criminal Justice with Honors and am currently working toward obtaining my Bachelor of Science Degree in Criminal Justice. Upon graduation, I am eager to begin a new chapter in my life and am extremely passionate about my future career choice as a juvenile probation officer.

To share a little bit about myself, I am a wife, mother and step-mother. Our children include 15-year-old twin boys, a 12-year-old son and a 9-year-old daughter. Going back to college was something that was always on my radar, but with higher education tuition being so expensive, returning to college seemed like a very faint dream to me at the time. I am only the second person in my family to ever attend college. I had attended a smaller university right out of high school but left shortly after because it was not the right environment for me.

After becoming a single mother, I decided to get a full-time job to provide for myself and my daughter; it was challenging to earn an adequate living without having a degree. My options were limited as many positions require education. It wasn't until I met my partner and was able to become a stay-at-home mom that my dream of completing my education would become a reality. To be successful, I knew that going to a large university was not something that I wanted. I also needed to be close to home, be in smaller classes, and I wanted to attend a college that had a sense of community. I found just that with Harrison College. The community created here at Harrison has allowed me to participate as a Student Ambassador, and allowed my children to also become actively involved in events hosted at the campus, which plants seeds of encouragement in them to see first-hand that they too can go to college.

I know first-hand that my earnings potential in not having a degree is significantly lower than in having one. Studies continue to show that the lifetime earnings of someone with a Bachelor's degree are significantly higher than someone with only high school. One of the main goals of going to college is to create a better life for myself and my family, and to be a contributing member to society.

The caliber of instruction that I am receiving at Harrison College is invaluable and I feel confident that it will place me that much farther ahead of my competition. I routinely have instructors who are chiefs of police, sheriffs, attorneys, prosecutors, detectives, and fraud investigators. Harrison also invites guest speakers to our campus to share their knowledge and work experience. I have had the opportunity to take several tours to places such as: BCI, the Franklin County Coroner's Office, the Department of Youth Services, and Boys & Girls Club to name a few. In addition, we have been visited by recruiters from the Franklin County Sheriff's Office, the Columbus and Grove City Police Departments, and the Ohio State Highway Patrol, all of which has helped me clearly identify my career path within the criminal justice field. For me

personally, I realized that working with young people is something I am very passionate about because I understand that for us to live in a civilized society, it starts with our youth. I had a great childhood and am living out my dreams, and feel that everyone deserves to have a shot at a great life regardless of circumstance.

To help me pay for college, I have received approximately \$2,000 from OCOG to date, and am supplementing my income by working part-time at Harrison College as a college work-study. As you can imagine, being a parent of 4 children, budgets are quite tight so receiving funding from OCOG has helped take some of the burden away from my student loan debt. If it weren't for scholarships, loans, and other grant funding programs – such as OCOG – that are offered to us, many people would not be able to afford to attend college.

On behalf of myself, and other students/taxpayers attending for-profit institutions, I ask that you please ensure that we can receive our fair share of the OCOG funding. Why would you want to penalize one taxpayer over another? Don't get me wrong, while I do appreciate any and all aid that I receive, I don't understand why I could potentially receive less than a similar student at a private institution that is not for-profit or public university. At the end of all of all this, I am still coming out with the same degree as someone who is attending a not for-profit or public school, so why should I be looked at any differently?

Again, thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony. I'm happy to answer your questions.