

Ohio Senate
Finance Subcommittee on Higher Education
House Bill 49
Testimony of Brian Kulp
Alumni, Fortis College, Columbus
May 23, 2017

Good afternoon, Chairman Gardner and members of the Committee. My name is Brian Kulp, and I'm a Registered Nurse at OhioHealth, here in Columbus Ohio. I'm also a graduate of Fortis College. I'm taking my personal time to be here today to ask you to continue funding the *Ohio College Opportunity Grant* so that students like me, can earn a degree and make a better life for themselves and their family.

I originally enrolled at Fortis College in the Practical Nursing program, and graduated as a PN in April, 2011. Two years after completing my PN, I returned to complete the Registered Nurse program. While I worked toward my RN at Fortis, I worked full-time as an LPN and parented twin teenage daughters. I am proud to say that I graduated with my RN in September 2015 with a 3.69 GPA. After graduation, I was offered a fellowship with OhioHealth where I continue to work today.

Fortis College's nursing programs provided me the education I needed, not only to take the first step into the healthcare field, but also the education I needed to be successful in the long run. The Degrees I received at Fortis College helped me start my career and got me in the doors of a great hospital like OhioHealth. I chose Fortis College because the classes fit into my busy life, and made it possible for me, as a working student and full-time father, to attend college and earn a degree.

In many ways, I'm typical of my peers at Fortis College, juggling work and parenting with a full college schedule. While I completed my RN, I worked approximately thirty hours per week, went to school between twenty and thirty hours per week and raised my twin girls. My wages I earned as an LPN during this time supported the girls who were fourteen years old at the time.

I faced many challenges to go to college, but I know that if you want something, you're going to work for it. I'm grateful that the *Ohio College Opportunity Grant* was available to help me put my best foot forward. The total cost of pursuing my nursing degree at Fortis was \$30,136. I received \$1,100 in OCOG during my pursuit of a nursing degree and from the federal grant program. I have also taken out \$26,220 in loans to bridge the gap between grant money and

cost of tuition. As I said earlier, I received a fellowship from OhioHealth after I graduated from Fortis College and I continue to be gainfully employed there today.

Without OCOG, I may have had to put my dreams on-hold, temporarily or permanently. Fortunately for me, I was eligible and received the boost I needed to make it happen. This is not just true for me, but OCOG helps many people like me better their lives and achieve dreams they may have thought impossible. When you know you have the cost of tuition covered, you can overcome different things in life that come up and may interfere. Even a relatively small amount of OCOG helps you stay in school, so you can earn your degree.

Please support the *Ohio College Opportunity Grant* for career college students. When you do, you will help us realize our life dreams. Thank you for listening. I'm happy to answer your questions.