

Testimony of Ronald Holassie
United States Senate
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
May 13, 2009

TO: Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee

My name is Ronald Holassie. I am currently Deputy Youth Mayor for Legislative Affairs for the District of Columbia. I am excelling and soaring to success. The D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program has changed my life and has made me the successful young man standing before you now. I credit this program greatly for my success.

But it all started in 6th grade. My mother was extremely concerned with my education. I was coming home almost every night with no homework and with poor grades. She was on the verge of sending me to her home country of Trinidad to go to school. Right around that time she found out about the Opportunity Scholarship Program, she applied and I was selected to receive the scholarship. My mother was very excited when she found out I was selected for the program. She felt that I now had a chance to receive a quality education and have a bright future. The program gave me a chance to change my life and be in a different high quality-learning environment. The program paid for my uniform and school tuition. My mother was so thankful because as a single parent she could not afford to pay for a private school.

Soon came the first day of school at a private school. I was quite nervous and didn't know what to expect. My first year was so much of a transition, having so many new expectations and requirements. I was forced to change and evolve. The next two years in the program I found myself changing so much. My study habits increased, I had better grades, I began to know my high expectations academically and I began to soar to success.

Then came my first year of high school at Archbishop Carroll. I made honor roll in the 1st quarter. There were so many activities and clubs for me to participate in. I had a proper learning environment, a high quality education, and a brighter future ahead of me. I am about to go on to the 11th grade, which I now have found out would be my last year, unless the Opportunity Scholarship Program is re-authorized. Right before 12th grade, my road to a brighter future of success would be shut down. I am struck that someone would take away my chance and others chances of having a brighter future of success. Everything I have worked for in my high school years would be lost. My road to a brighter future would be stalled. This could cause me to go backward. You should never have to go back or look back when you are moving forward in a positive direction. My future of success would become a lost dream. I say this and mean this. No one should take away my future and dreams of becoming a successful young man. No one should take that away from me and the other 1,700 children in this program. We have been on a long road and have come so far and been through so much to get to where we are today.

One of my greatest passions is music, which was inspired by this program. I started writing lyrics while I was in this program as my reading and writing level in public school was so far behind that it became difficult for me to write lyrics successfully. The high quality education with the advanced level of reading and writing helped me advance my skills as a lyricist. I had music class in private school that taught me more and went into depth. I then discovered my voice and began singing. I then became better and began to evolve as a singer. Currently I have 6 albums of songs and I have recorded, written and co-produced my songs. I'm now working in the studio recording my promo. This has been my dream, which I am now achieving because of the Opportunity Scholarship Program.

I will again say, the Opportunity Scholarship Program must continue. There is no if, and, or but about it. Just as I have evolved and changed so much as a person, other Opportunity Scholarship Program recipients are doing so as well. My little brother, Richard, is also a recipient of the OSP. He is in 3rd grade at Preparatory School of DC and is doing really well. It is not only about me and Richard and the 1,700 current recipients. I want other children to have the same opportunity of school choice as we have had. I want them to evolve and succeed and have a brighter future. We are the future of DC, of the United States of America, and of the World. This program is so powerful and magnificent as it can change an individual and make them a better more successful person with a brighter future, just like me.

We are going to fight for this program until it is reauthorized. We are going to stand together for school choice. No one is going to take away my dream of a successful future. I now presently stand representing the youth of DC and the Opportunity Scholarship Program. Everyone should have a choice in where they are educated, including the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program.