

Dear members of the committee:

I appreciate the time you are taking to listen to my experiences. I would first like to apologize for not being able to attend this testimonial period in person, as my schedule is burdened with classes on this day. My name is Matin Sanaei and I am a full time student at the University of Colorado working on my BS in biology and a prospective pre-med student as well as an advocate with Young Invincibles in the Young Advocates Program. My discourse today is in favour of the Higher Education Student Emergency Assistance Grant bill (HB 20-1110).

The inherent costs of post secondary credentials and higher education have increasingly been the reason for many of my fellow students finding it harder and harder to find the motive to continue the path they are on. The cost of attendance often comes at the detriment of giving something else up and/or pushing the boundaries to try and pay for tuition bills during census dates. Even with the University of Colorado Denver being one of the cheaper four year institutions in Colorado, and the considerable help I receive from FAFSA every year, college remains stressful in terms of the price. A single event such as an accident or family emergency would deviate me from my ability to maintain my post secondary path.

I have noted that many times the reason for students falling short of degree completion or extending time to finishing college is a large part due to the repression of recurring issues that result in momentaneous accidents or events that cease the ability to manage the extraneous pressures. Many of these maintenance concerns could be solved with monetary resources, yet there is little wiggle room for already restrained college students. As a prospective pre-med student I have been cognizant of the fact that any deviations from the time intensive and cumulative curriculum will be detrimental to my peers and may decrease the likelihood of their career expectations.

I would like to highlight a recent personal example, my mother and family were unfortunately faced with a slew of medical bills that significantly impacted how much my family could financially contribute to my higher education. Based on a FAFSA application that I submitted a year ago where my mother was earning just enough that no financial aid was offered to me for college. That decision did not reflect the new developments in my family's finances — it would be almost impossible for them to help me pay for college now that my family was buried in medical bills due to my mother's cancer treatment.

My education-first mentality was tested several times during this period. As I began my first semester of college, I prioritized classes that were important and required for my major over classes that I found interesting or could offer a unique learning opportunity because I didn't feel like I had the luxury to spend the limited resources I had.

I also applied to many quick paying jobs, which took time away from focusing on getting internships related to my field. I chose to work hard and make sacrifices rather than going to my family for help because they simply weren't in the position to help out financially. Fiscal hardship situations are not uncommon on college campuses yet they often go unnoticed or ignored.

The impact of a state wide implemented Emergency Grant Aid Bill would not only be seen within the academic community, but the return on investment would be seen within the state as a whole. Short term monetary intervention would allow many students to reach their career goals and increase a robust workforce in the years to come.

I'd like to thank the committee for listening to my remarks. I hope you take my story and experiences into consideration as I ask you to support HB 20-1110.

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