

Dear members of the committee,

My name is Destynee Martinez and I am currently studying nursing at Red Rocks Community College. Unfortunately, I can't express my story in person due to my school schedule, which I feel might actually help make my point in asking you to support HB 20-1110, Higher Education Student Emergency Assistance Grants.

While I fortunately have not yet been in a situation where I had no choice but to leave school or to decide *between* school and my well-being, I have seen plenty of my peers affected by such a scenario.

One being one of my close friends who was nearing the finish line of earning her degree. I witnessed the intense amount of hard work and stress that resulted in her studies. Instead of completing her degree, she was faced with the sudden and extremely unexpected threat of homelessness. Despite having kept jobs since she was 17, there was no way she would be able to continue school *and* support herself. Unfortunately, she was faced with no other option but to drop out to take care of what started as a snowball of finances that only grew bigger. To this day, she has not completed her credentials and graduated yet.

Right now, in order to follow the steps for a "better life" that our parents have always told us about, we gamble the stability and quality of life over the next few years.

The story of my friend is important because there are plenty of students just like her; just because a student receives assistance through financial aid, scholarships or a private program, it does not mean their degree is guaranteed. My friend barely had enough to do what she needed to with what she was given before. I, myself, also wasn't in a position to help her the way she needed, but I know if she got even a little extra support, she would be on the path to securing a blooming career, knowing her circumstances would be better than what she is currently facing. When something unexpected happens and we have nothing to fall back on, our

plans and aspirations shouldn't have to come to a stop because we don't have enough money to see them through.

There's too much that can go wrong as a student and I can easily think of a few yet reasonably "unexpected" things that can happen to me within the year. If one were to ever happen, I don't think I'd be able to deal with the extra financial burdens it would bring. Students need help from our state and institutions when they can't control unexpected circumstances. Let's remember that money shouldn't be the defining factor of what makes a good student.

Thank you for taking the time to read my story. I urge the committee to think about the needs of today's students and invest in improving the state's completion rate by supporting HB 20-1110.

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