

United States Department of Education

**Statement by
Sally L. Stroup, Assistant Secretary for Postsecondary
Education
before the Committee on Homeland Security and
Governmental Affairs,
Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the
Federal Workforce and the District of Columbia
on
the District of Columbia Tuition Assistance Grant program**

February 28, 2006

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the District of Columbia Tuition Assistance Grant program.

The Administration shares Mayor Williams' goal of bettering the lives of the residents of the District of Columbia through improved educational opportunities and we appreciate his efforts on behalf of elementary, secondary and postsecondary students.

Mr. Chairman, the Administration supports reauthorization of the District of Columbia College Access Act of 1999. This act established the Tuition Assistance Grant (TAG) program in order to provide eligible college bound students living in the District of Columbia with greater choices among institutions of higher education. The program provides undergraduate District students up to \$10,000 annually to attend eligible four-year public universities and colleges nationwide at in-state tuition rates. It also provides

up to \$2,500 to attend private institutions in the D.C. metropolitan area and private Historically Black Colleges and Universities nationwide or public two-year community colleges.

The District of Columbia has been managing the TAG program since its inception and they have worked hard to administer the program on behalf of the students residing here in the District. As with any new program, it takes time to work through the details of implementation and execution, but the increasing numbers of students who are benefiting from this program each year is evidence that the program is working.

For school year 2004-2005, more than 4,700 students enrolled in the program and are attending colleges in 45 states, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands. More than 600 colleges across the country have signed agreements with the District to participate in this program. And I can tell you that dealing with hundreds of colleges with their own rules and procedures is never an easy task so the District is to be commended.

Although these are impressive statistics, it does not fully demonstrate the success of the program. In a recent survey of Woodson High School students, approximately 75 percent stated that TAG affected their decision to pursue post-secondary education and 65 percent responded that the program affected their school choice. One of the most compelling reasons to continue the TAG program, in my opinion, is that 55 percent of the participants are the first members of their immediate families to attend college.

The Administration's FY 2007 Budget requests \$35.1 million for the TAG program, an increase of \$1.9 million over 2006, which is needed to keep pace with rising tuition costs and increased student participation. As you know, 90 percent of the fastest growing jobs in this country require some postsecondary education and we want students living here in the district to have an opportunity to pursue the education that will help them get one of those jobs. This program, in addition to the \$80 billion the federal government will make available to our nation's college students this year will help all of our students pursue their dreams of a college education.

Mr. Chairman, this completes my testimony. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or other members of the Committee may have.