



The Welfare to Work
PARTNERSHIP

Testimony of
Sharon Johnson
Key Bridge Marriott
Rosslyn, Virginia
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The Needs for the Working Poor:
Helping Families Make Ends Meet
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P A R T N E R S H I P

Good morning Senator Wellstone, Senator Gregg and members of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee. I thank you all for inviting me to speak about my experience on welfare and my life as a working woman.

I went on welfare after the birth of my son, Joshua. I was on welfare for more than eight years, which is a long time to be on welfare. I did not like it. Being on welfare is a hindrance to your life. You are not making any provisions for yourself, and you are not getting anywhere. It was not the way I wanted to live.

I was always in search of a job, and eventually, I would find one. Reliable child care was impossible to find, and my son was young. I worked here and there, but soon enough, I would have to quit because I could not find anyone to pick up my son or watch him during the day.

I have always wanted to work at Marriott, so when I heard about the Pathways to Independence program at Marriott I jumped at the opportunity. Fortunately, when I started the training at Marriott, I found someone to take care of my son and pick him up from school. Things were falling into place for me.

I started at Marriott on June 12, 1997 as a station attendant. I was chopping greens for salad, and I was earning \$7 an hour. Thanks to their training, I've moved beyond that entry-level position and I now earn \$12.20 an hour in my new position as a lead cook. I love cooking, and I plan to continue it, but there is more that I want to do. I am working on getting my high school diploma through an external program at Ballous High School. After I get my diploma, I hope to continue my education and possibly go to school to be a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN).

Marriott – which is part of The Welfare to Work Partnership, a business coalition dedicated to hiring and advancing those that have been on welfare – opened so many doors for me, and I feel as though I can go anywhere and do anything. It is programs like that, which offer training, that best help people get off welfare and get started in a career.

People often think that it easy to get off welfare. If you put your mind to it, and if you want to work, you can do it. But the path is not easy. Reliable child care is the biggest stumbling block for so many on welfare. I still see people struggling with finding someone to watch their children, and I am reminded of how hard it was for me. Finding someone to watch my son was the hardest obstacle I faced to finding a job and supporting him. My son is now 15 years, and able to take care of himself after school. A lot of people who are on welfare do not know how to get day care, or how to afford it. That is what hinders so many people from first finding a job and then staying there.

When I was on welfare, I did receive food stamps. Once I started with Marriott, I was able to afford my groceries and I no longer had to rely on them. To be honest, I was glad to be done with them. I was happy to be working, supporting my son and myself.

I have a good-paying job at Marriott, but there are other supports that I use to add to my salary and provide for my son. These other programs have played a key role in helping me advance at Marriott. My rent is affordable, since I am lucky to live in HUD housing. I have lived there for the

past seven years, but I would like to move out and I am looking to buy a house. I hear that there is affordable housing in D.C., and I am looking hard for it.

I apply for the Earned Income Tax Credit when I fill out my taxes, which is a helpful addition to my salary. I also receive child support payments from Joshua's father. Both of these have helped provide for a growing teenage boy, as well as improve our lives. I have a car now, which I use to get back and forth from work.

The world is full of opportunities for me, since I got off welfare and started working at Marriott. I love my job, and I am working hard to create even more opportunities for myself.

I thank you all for this opportunity and I will be glad to answer any questions.