

Joint Senate and House Educational Committee Hearing
Hearing Room 1, North Office Building,
May 24, 2017 – 9 AM

Student Testimony
Submitted by Philip G. Puleo, CSAGH Superintendent

This morning as you consider additional ways to provide families the opportunity to choose an education that best fits their hopes and goals for their children, allow me to share a simple story that exemplifies numerous ways in which your previous efforts (i.e. EITC and OSTC) have positively impacted a child's future.

For purpose of this testimony, allow me to call the girl Danielle. Danielle and her mom live in Harrisburg and Danielle was a student in the Harrisburg School district. Struggling with learning issues and finding little support. Allow me to clarify what I mean by little support. Danielle's 5th Grade Report Card, for which she submitted for application to HCS, had over 50% of the grades missing including 4 of 7 classes not having a final grade and no class having all five grades (four marking periods and a final grade). This was not because Danielle didn't do the work, it was a lack of care and oversight to ensure that the final year report sent home to a parent was complete. That proved to be the "final straw" to approach Harrisburg Christian School for enrollment. While Danielle struggled academically, HCS made the commitment to enroll her and to provide her the additional academic support she would need. One problem remained, Danielle's mom couldn't afford the tuition. This is where the Commonwealth provided assistance. Providing the opportunities for businesses to contribute to scholarship funds in return for an Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit (OSTC) allowed HCS to award Danielle and OSTC Scholarship and thus enroll in HCS. Without OSTC, Danielle would have remained in a School District that was not meeting her needs.

Since her enrollment at HCS, Danielle has grown in her academic abilities and beginning to think about High School and beyond. But to show the power of an opportunity (provided by an OSTC Scholarship), I must share with you the day that a taxi cab showed up at the door of the school. One day a taxi cab came to school and the driver walked a young middle school girl into the building. It was Danielle. She had missed the bus. Rather than going home, she called a cab to take her to school. As she went to class, the driver turned to the secretary and said, "she didn't pay for her ride". The secretary didn't think twice as she paid the cab. The girl who was struggling in Harrisburg School District who had become disengaged from her education as a result of the disengagement of others around her, took it upon herself to get to Harrisburg Christian School a way she could to continue the education that was being provided for her.

Danielle's story begins with a mother's hope and a government encouraged scholarship (OSTC) and concludes with a life changed and a future being realized. Don't underestimate the power you have to encourage motivate businesses to participate in the education of the future workforce, to provide hope to families to choose an education that they believe is best for their children, and to inspire children to take ownership of their education and to reach for their dreams. Thank you for your continued support of EITCS and OSTC and for moving forward in considering another popularly successful program (as proven in other States) such as Educational Savings Accounts.

The Christian School Association of Greater Harrisburg (CSAGH) is the governing body of Harrisburg Christian School (Linglestown), West Shore Christian Academy (Shiremanstown), and Devonshire Kindergarten (Lower Paxton). Together they educate nearly 700 students and employ over 120 faculty and staff who come from over 120 churches and parishes in 5 counties. The vision is to help young people **Explore** their God-given design, **Excel** in life and learning, and **Engage** their world.