

**HOUSE FINANCE & APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
HOUSE BILL 64 TESTIMONY OF
Marsean Ross
Student, Walsh University**

Chairman Smith, Vice Chairman Schuring, Ranking Member Driehaus, my name is Marsean Ross and I am a senior and Vice President of the Black Student Union at Walsh University. This is my first visit to the Ohio State House and never would imagine that I would have the opportunity to come before you today. I appreciate the opportunity to discuss House Bill 64 with you today and specifically the Ohio College Opportunity Grant. OCOG provides support to Ohio's needs-based students to attend a public or private college or university in Ohio. I am originally from the east side of Columbus where I was born and raised in a low-middle class neighborhood. I attend Warner Ridge High School here in Columbus. I am scheduled to graduate May 3, 2015 with a degree in communications and broadcasting from Walsh University. I am the third person other than my brother and cousin to graduate college in the last two years. I am inspired to be a radio broadcasting manager and next week I am meeting with a marketing committee comprised of local news representatives, radio and marketing stations in Columbus to display my resume and abilities to with hopes of securing of job in the broadcasting field.

I am a recipient of the Ohio College Opportunity Grant and thank you for your past support of this important program that is critical to students like me. I come here today to advocate for the continued support of OCOG and ask you to consider an increase to this important program.

My family and I stressed over paying my college tuition and received very little money from the federal and state government. My mom and I struggled to find financial stability. I have spent the majority of my college career worrying if I was going to be back in school the next semester. I spent every summer working various jobs and borrowing money from family members. I started classes late every semester leading up to Fall 2014 due to financial restraints. By the grace of God I am here today having almost completed my education and speaking to people in your position to make opportunities grow for future Ohio college graduates. The increase in dollars to the OCOG will benefit not only the students, but also their families who usually struggle to cover the extra tuition they cannot afford to pay, often leaving their children in a situation where they are forced to take a semester off or drop out.

I would like to thank Walsh University for their support of me as I seek to finish College. For me, my education experience at the University has

helped to prepare me for my future career. I plan to live and work here in Ohio. I hope to have a family and will raise my kids here along with the plan that they too will have the same opportunities and maybe even better than I have had. Much of this hope I owe to my College Education.

Consistent with the request of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, we ask that OCOG funding be increased in this biennial budget.

I will be happy to answers any questions you may have.