



## **Charlotte-Area Students, Nonprofits Advocate for Better FAFSA and Higher Education Access in Washington, D.C.**

CHARLOTTE, NC — March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024 — A group of high school and college students from the Charlotte area traveled to Capitol Hill for the annual National College Attainment Network (NCAN) Hill Day. The event, which took place in Washington, D.C., on March 21, saw these five students engaging directly with House and Senate legislators to advocate for the importance of the Pell Grant, simplifying the FAFSA, and other higher education policies aimed at expanding access to higher education nationwide.

The students were selected for this opportunity through their participation in three local nonprofit organizations - Carolina Youth Coalition, GenOne, and Road to Hire - who focus on college access and success for under-resourced students. Each of these groups is also a member of the Crescent Coalition, a Charlotte-based collaborative of organizations working together to serve under-resourced students along their journey from middle school through college graduation and successful careers.

Organized by NCAN, Hill Day provides an invaluable opportunity for students to have their voices heard on crucial issues that impact their future. The Pell Grant, a federal subsidy for students who demonstrate financial need, has long been a cornerstone of financial aid programs, enabling millions of students to pursue their dreams of higher education.

Alongside leaders from these organizations, students were able to share their experiences with the turbulent rollout of the 2024-2025 FAFSA and to vocalize their support for ensuring that the Pell Grant remains accessible and effective for future generations. National FAFSA completion rates are down more than 30% from this time last year.

During the visit to Capitol Hill, the group met with the congressional offices of Sen. Tedd Budd (R-NC), Rep. Alma Adams (D-NC), Rep. Bobby Scott (D-VA), Rep. Valerie Foushee (D-NC), Rep. Wiley Nickel (D-NC), and Rep. Martha Gallagher (R-NC). Participation in Hill Day for the group was made possible through support from Equitable Foundation, a lead supporter of the Crescent Coalition and NCAN. Equitable Foundation is the charitable giving arm of Equitable, a leading financial services provider.

“Equitable Foundation is proud to support both the National College Attainment Network as well as students and organizations from our partnership with The Crescent Coalition. Providing opportunities for students to lend their voices to these important issues is an impactful way to advocate for so many that rely on Federal Student Aid and other support mechanisms to realize the dream of attending a college or university,” says Jarian Kerekes, Head of Social Impact and Community Engagement at Equitable.

NCAN Hill Day is part of a broader effort to advocate for policies that support college access and success. By bringing together students, educators, policymakers, and advocates, NCAN aims to drive positive change and create a more equitable higher education landscape.

**For more information:**

- Equitable Hill Day Recap Video - <https://youtu.be/fq3JoAMdTO0>
- NCAN Hill Day and the National College Attainment Network - [www.ncan.org](http://www.ncan.org)
- Carolina Youth Coalition - [www.carolinayouth.org](http://www.carolinayouth.org)
- GenOne - [www.genoneclt.org](http://www.genoneclt.org)
- Road to Hire - [www.roadtohire.org](http://www.roadtohire.org)
- Crescent Coalition - <https://crescentcoalition.leadingonopportunity.org/>

**Participating students:**

- Camryn Bailey - Howard University, Carolina Youth Coalition
- Samir Flamer - Howard University, Carolina Youth Coalition
  - *“Overall I had an amazing experience not only being able to talk to Congress members one-on-one about my experiences as it relates to higher education and my community but also hearing alternative perspectives from those representing other college access organizations from around the United States who help advocate for these resources that are so important to us.”*
- Faty Mbaye - UNC Charlotte, GenOne
- Daisey Rios-Alvarez - Wingate University, GenOne
  - *“Advocating at Hill Day was a deeply meaningful experience for me as it allowed me to support not only our cause but also the struggles faced by countless student trying to overcome financial obstacles on their journey. As a whole, I gladly accept the responsibility of speaking for people like me who are seeking a higher education.”*
- Allyssa Vassell – Julius Chambers High School, Road to Hire

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