

Good morning Chairperson Conlon and members of the House Education Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Emiliana Bedrosian. I'm from Burlington and I participated in the CCV Early College program. I'm currently in a gap year and will attend McGill University this fall to study political science and economics, and that academic direction came directly from the courses I took through CCV.

Before Early College, I didn't know what I wanted to study. During the program I took American Politics and Government, and that class changed how I thought about education and what I wanted to do with it. It made college feel purposeful instead of something I was just expected to do after high school.

My high school is currently located in a renovated downtown building that does not have specialized facilities like a ceramics studio. Ceramics was very important to me, and through CCV I was able to take Ceramics I and II in a fully equipped studio with proper materials and instruction. Those classes didn't just give me credits, they gave me skills. With that experience, I was able to get a job as an art teacher at Burlington City Arts. I would not have had that opportunity without Early College.

Taking real college classes while still in high school changed how I approach learning. I had to manage a syllabus, meet long-term deadlines, and communicate directly with professors. Because of that, I'm entering college already understanding the expectations instead of trying to figure them out for the first time.

Early College also gave me flexibility and time to work. During that period I built a clothing resale and upcycling business and earned over \$8,000. Combined with earning college credits early, I now have fewer semesters left to complete and I can spend this year saving money, which reduces how much I need to borrow.

For students like me, the barrier to higher education is not motivation, it's risk. Early College lowers that risk. It helps students discover what they want to study, gain real skills, and enter college more prepared both academically and financially.

Education is especially meaningful to me because my mother came to this country as a refugee, and access to learning represents stability and opportunity in my family. Programs like Early College make that opportunity real and practical, not just theoretical.

I encourage continued support for programs that allow high school students to take real college courses and build a path before they graduate.

Thank you, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

