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Testimony to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, Gaming Oversight Committee

Public Hearing on HB 1317, Tuition Relief Act

10:00 AM, Kutztown University, Kutztown, Pennsylvania

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Hello, my name is Ahmad Al-Hiyari and I live in Berks County. I am speaking to you today on behalf of parents across the state who want to send their children to college.

The Tuition Relief Act is probably the smartest and most compassionate piece of legislation I have seen because it's an investment in our children and our future.

Though I realize the word “gambling” is often equated with something bad, in this case it means shaping the future and destiny of a lot of young men and women who otherwise may never have had the chance to attend college.

Think about it this way. A 22-year-old student graduates from college, but the student does so with 60 to 80 thousand dollars in debt.

How do you expect him or her to contribute to society and to the economy, and to be productive, especially in these uncertain times? When we talk about a stimulus package, this would be one with a guaranteed result that I'm sure we all agree on – the opportunity to go to college, graduate, and contribute to the state economy.

I have been in the United State of America for over 30 years and I have worked hard every single day to make a living. My dream was to get a college degree, but unfortunately I was unable to do so.

I have only one son. His name is Adam and I have a dream for him to have a better life than I have had in this great country that we all love and cherish.

I know that many of you are parents and want nothing but the best for your children. Please think of Adam as one of your children and think of how much you want your children to attend college. I stay up at night thinking about how to come up with money to make that dream come true for my child.

Adam is about to graduate from high school and has already been accepted into West Chester University to begin college this fall. If the Tuition Relief Act passes, I will not have to lay awake at night wondering how we will be able to afford his tuition bills. More importantly, if the Tuition Relief Act passes, my son will not have to lay awake at night for years after he graduates wondering how he will pay off years of loans, with interest.

Please give Adam and the other tens of thousands like him a chance to realize their dream.

Remember that we live in the great state of Pennsylvania; we can be the example for other states, letting the rest of the country know how much Pennsylvania cares for its children and their future. We will be setting the example for how we can make sure that our citizens are productive and able to contribute to the economy – through a college education.

I believe that you have no choice but to pass this bill; I will never understand how anyone could be against it or how anyone could vote against my child being able to achieve his dream.

Thank you for allowing me to present my testimony.