



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

February 17, 2022

Dear Dr. Curry:

The US Department of Education hosted a round table discussion between Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona and Black students from around the nation to discuss challenges impacting college students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, Secretary Cardona asked the student participants about mental health challenges, gaps in basic needs, and challenges related to recovering from the pandemic. The students shared their own struggles and successes, as well as the challenges of their peers and families and support offered to students.

We sincerely appreciated the contribution of Compton College's very own student Eboni Tratt. In a group of seven students from seven states, Eboni brought the important perspective of a community college student to the discussion. During the round table, Eboni spoke directly to Secretary Cardona about increasing the number of mentorship programs for incoming college students, providing access to affordable on-campus housing for students with the most need, and continuing to push for free community college nation-wide—a top priority for President Biden, First Lady Dr. Biden, and Secretary Cardona. Eboni also spoke to the support system she has at Compton College. She told the Secretary that she received \$5,000.00 in HEERF emergency grants, which allowed her to pay for tuition and basic needs like housing and food expenses. It was encouraging to hear that Compton College was able to quickly distribute funds and target those funds to students most in need.

Speaking directly to students and listening to their challenges and triumphs is one of the greatest privileges and opportunities the Secretary experiences. The lived experiences of the communities we serve, especially our nation's students, are critical inputs that shape our policymaking.

Thank you for your swift actions in recommending a student leader from Compton College to participate in this event with the Secretary. We are grateful for your partnership, and to you and Eboni for your crucial contribution to making this discussion a success. We look forward to working with you and the students at Compton College in the future.

Sincerely,

Michelle Asha Cooper, Ph.D.

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Higher Education Programs,  
Delegated the Authority to Perform the Functions  
and Duties of the Assistant Secretary, Office of Postsecondary Education