Good morning! My name is Chay’Vion Moore. I would like to thank my TRIO advisors, Nancy and Camilia, who have helped prepare me for moments like this, as well as ones I will encounter further down the road. I would also like to thank the Pell Institute and the Council for Opportunity in Education for giving me the opportunity to share my story; it truly means lot.

I am second oldest of six and I am a first-generation college student. I recently graduated with an associate of arts degree at North Central Texas College. North Central Texas College was not my school of choice, but my school by necessity. It was the most affordable community college in my area, but even though it was the most affordable, I still had $5,000 dollars of unmet financial need. The $6,000 dollars offered by the Pell Grant paid for my books and tuition. That does not account for the transportation, food, and living expenses needed to survive. Because of this deficit, my education was short-circuited. I had to give energy to working 20-40 hours a week so I could have the things I lacked. This reality made education secondary most of the time.

Going to college is an anomaly in my family. My mother had me, her second child, at the age of 18. My father had already served a prison sentence before I was born and like many of the men in my family, he was in jail during most of my upbringing. Subsequently, I was raised in an impoverished, female-dominated household. Whereas, students who grew up in a two parent
household or with influential male figures usually did not have to face the uphill battle that was in store for me.

The truth is that I’ve never been pushed academically because my mother did not have the time while she had to raise my five other siblings and maintain a household. I was not aware of resources available to me because it was never truly mentioned in my household and I did not know where to get the information necessary to excel. I had always loved school and wanted to go college but postsecondary education was unaffordable. When it boils down to it, my lack of economic security truly hindered my ability to succeed academically. Even the process of applying for universities is usually planned out, or assisted with. Yet, because of my family’s financial struggle and inexperience with higher education, I fought the battle alone.

The journey to graduating with my associate’s degree was very hard fought. Now, to complete my bachelor’s degree, I will have to face the toughest obstacle thus far. I have decided to go the University of North Texas, which is a public institution. Currently, the total cost for attending the University of North Texas is $26,000 dollars. My financial aid package is offering around $18,000. Nearly half of that money is from loans that I am trying to avoid. I have put myself in a position to be competitive for scholarships with my 3.55 GPA and consistent volunteer hours. Even if I accepted the loans, it would not meet the need for food, books, transportation, and living expenses. This is not a minor problem, especially when you live in a low-income household and are depended upon to support your family. The biggest obstacle while juggling these responsibilities is maintaining my GPA. However, because of the amount of money offered
by Texas, the expectation for me is to handle all of these things and still succeed academically. It’s a sharp contrast from my peers who grew up more fortunate.

Completing my bachelor’s degree is very important and being a first-generation student gives me plenty of motivation to accomplish what others in my family could not. As challenging as it may be, I will continue to strive for a degree in education. However, the struggles that have to be endured by students with unmet financial need is great. This is evident in students earning lower grades and those students who drop out because of their unmet financial need.

Making it to this point has not been easy. If not for my grandmother allowing me to live with her, or the help I’ve gotten from my community, I would not have made it to this point. The odds are clearly not in my favor, but I will continue to be resourceful and reach for my dream of receiving my bachelor’s degree.

Thank you.