



CHAnge-makers

Navigating the capitol of the United States is no easy task. It takes not only grit and communication skills to work with elected officials and policy makers, but a strong sense of direction to navigate Capitol Hill and the halls of Congress.

But that is exactly how recent CHA scholarship recipient Tierica Coleman, now a 20-year-old rising junior at Georgetown University, has spent her summer as an intern in the office of U.S. Congressman Bobby Rush (D-IL).

Coleman grew up in the South Side Englewood community, and when considering college, she felt the U.S. capitol, though a long way from home, would be the best place for her to pursue her interests in government. Although accepted as a freshman to Georgetown University, she chose instead to complete her first year at Howard University eager to see herself represented in her peers and professors at a high level institution. That goal accomplished, Tierica reapplied to Georgetown for her sophomore year which she now attends with a full scholarship.

For Coleman, academics are just one part of her preparation for a successful career.

“Thanks to the Chicago Housing Authority, I was able to complete my first formal internship experience after I completed my freshman year of college. I interned in the CHA property office under Region Two here in Chicago where I explored every aspect of the office’s function, from engaging with renters and attending community meetings, to going on house inspections and completing development trainings,” said Coleman. This year CHA offered roughly 2,400 paid employment and learning opportunities to young people like Coleman to prepare them for the professional world.

“I was able to earn an income and I developed invaluable social skills that allow me to handle difficult situations and manage constituents. This opportunity has helped me to secure additional opportunities as well while I’ve been in school.”

Eager to learn and grow, during her Spring semester of 2017, Coleman worked as a press intern for Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL) on the Hill, attending and photographing events, writing talking points and press releases and working on social media. As important, she networked with a wide range of individuals and was able to connect with the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, which this summer placed her in a paid internship position with Congressman Bobby Rush.

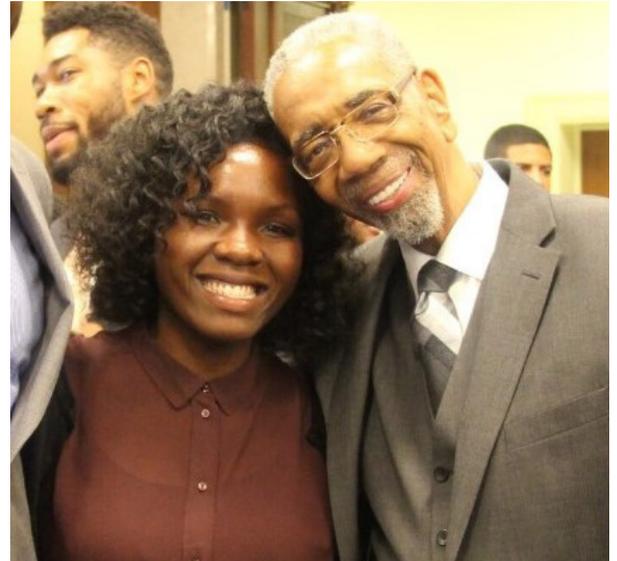
“I had an incredible time in (Senator) Durbin’s office, and with Congressman Rush, I have dug even deeper. I have been able to direct my own work and really get to know the process of legislation. As an intern for Congressman Rush, I’ve focused, researched and drafted a bill that is important to me that he brought to the floor for consideration,” said Coleman.

Earlier in the year, Coleman identified that vulnerable individuals regularly face financial exploitation when attempting to remove an arrest photo from public websites. She felt this was an issue that could be addressed by updating the Fair Credit Reporting Act, and it was an issue that needed attention. The bill she’s worked on for Congressman Rush is H.R. 3539, the Mugshots Elimination Act of 2017. If implemented it will, “establish a procedure for the removal of a booking photos from a consumer’s file and from websites that financially exploit those seeking redress.”

“This was an eye opening experience,” said Coleman, and she will now track the progress of her bill that was introduced in July of 2017 as it is considered by policy makers.

What’s next?

In the Spring of 2018, Coleman plans to study abroad in Ghana, and she is considering an opportunity with the Public Defender’s office in Washington D.C. upon her return. Coleman is one of 235 CHA scholarship recipients this year – the largest cohort ever for the Authority – and she says these additional funds will pay for her books and academic supplies so she can focus on opportunities that are relevant to her goals and ambitions that she might otherwise forgo like traveling abroad.



Tierica Coleman (left) with Congressman Bobby Rush (D-IL) (right) celebrating a successful summer internship.