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Pennsylvania Senate Labor and Industry and Education Committees
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Good morning. My name is Tara Butler and I am a proud graduate of Peirce College, Class of 2016 and 2018. I have a bachelor's degree in Health Information Administration (HIA) and an associate degree in Health Information Technology (HIT). I work for Penn Medicine as an Audit Revenue Integrity Coordinator for our corporate Patient Accounting department. I hold four professional certifications: Registered Health Information Administrator (RHIA), Certified Professional Medical Auditor (CPMA), Certified Professional Coder (CPC) and Certified Revenue Cycle Specialist (CRCS). I am an active committee member for two professional organizations, the Pennsylvania Health Information Management Association (PHIMA) and the Southeastern Pennsylvania Health Information Management (SePHIMA). I also serve as a subject matter expert for the American Health Information Management Association's (AHIMA) Registered Health Information Technician exam. And I continue to look for ways to improve myself.

Before I came to Peirce in 2014, I was working as a Radiology Coder at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). I attended college right after high school but due to unforeseen circumstances I had to drop out. My biggest regret was not finishing school. I tried to go back to school a few years prior to enrolling at Peirce, but it did not work. I knew I wanted more but I did not think I could do it now; I had a family to take care of and other responsibilities. I could not imagine taking on more. I had my doubts.

So, I continued to work and take care of my family for the next two years. During that time, I felt stuck in my position at CHOP, and I knew if I wanted to go farther with my career, I needed to go back to school. But it had been so long since I attended class and I was scared to start over. I did not know where to start. My first step was to figure out how I could afford to go back to school. Luckily, I found out that my employer offered tuition reimbursement so that helped me begin to look for a school. But I did not know where to begin or what I would even study. A coworker told me that she recently graduated with her associate's degree in HIT. Since I was coding full time, this degree program peaked my interests.

I did some research into her school to see what they had to offer. Although it was the right choice for her, it was not the right fit for me. So, I kept looking. I looked at several more schools before I came across Peirce College. I wanted a school where I could take all my classes online. I wanted a school that offered flexible scheduling. I needed an affordable place to attend school. I found out all these things were available at Peirce. They had the associate's program for HIT and they had a great reputation. I reached out to their admissions office, and someone contacted me immediately. The admissions rep helped me with everything. She eased all my concerns on how to get started and what I needed to do. I felt like she really wanted me to succeed.

After our conversation, I was hooked on Peirce. I do not regret my decision to attend Peirce College. I received endless support from every staff member I met during my time there. I knew my transition into being a part-time student, full-time employee, parent, and wife wasn't going to be easy. But Peirce made it easier. They gave me the tools I needed to succeed and helped me through my journey. They believed in me and gave me the support I needed.

Initially, I thought I only wanted my associate's degree but going to Peirce made me change my mind. After getting my HIT degree it was a no brainer that I would continue at Peirce to complete my bachelor's degree. Because Peirce's program was completely stackable, I could apply all of the credits I had already earned and transferred to the College. I completed my degree requirements with a 3.6 GPA. I was the 2015 AHIMA Foundation Merit Scholarship recipient and awarded \$1,000 to help with school. I was on the Dean's List several times during my time at Peirce. Even after graduation, I knew I could always reach out to them for help, and I did.

The education, the support, the professional relationships, the confidence has all been thanks to Peirce College. Without Peirce I do not think I could have accomplished all these things. It has been a dream come true to get both of my degrees and certifications. Now I am more confident when applying for different jobs due to my education and experience. Peirce helped me get to this point in my career.

It is so important that adult students have access to programs like those that are offered at Peirce and have assistance paying for their education. Adult students need the types of flexibility and support that Peirce provides, and that helped me complete my degree and earn my certifications, all while balancing my professional and personal responsibilities. I hope that you will help other students like me to get access to these programs and achieve their goals.

Thank you.