

Ricky Gilmore-Vega

Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute Intern

Wellman Recipient 2020

Thanks to the Wellman Hill Grant, I was able to intern with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI). In spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, my summer internship with the CHCI was nothing short of incredible. I participated in a ten-week virtual internship with CHCI where I participated in professional programming and leadership development workshops to learn more about the federal legislative process.

CHCI converted their entire congressional internship into an online program that allowed participants to gain experience similar to that of traditional congressional internships. There were several workshops focused on congressional internship duties, and I was able to meet a couple of staffers that currently work on Capitol Hill. Additionally, I was able to meet and network with so many different professionals working in Washington D.C. This virtual program enhanced my legislative knowledge, professional skills and leadership competencies. I was able to meet and network with several Latinx leaders across the country. As a part of the program, I participated in a public policy seminar led by George Washington University's Cisneros Hispanic Leadership Institute. In this seminar, all the interns held various roles in different mock congressional hearings, and engaged with current issues in an effort to better understand the legislative process.

One of the more important aspects of the internship program was the Community Ambassadors Service Project. In addition to the various workshops on community organizing and planning, interns were responsible for coming up with their own virtual event geared to their own community. My virtual event, "Juntos Somos Más," addressed civic engagement in

Cleveland during the age of COVID-19. In preparation, I spent time meeting and networking with local community leaders here in Cleveland in an effort to recruit them as panelists for the panel discussion. I was able to coordinate five different speakers that represented several organizations, to speak on opportunities for students to remain active in spite of COVID-19 restrictions. Altogether, there were approximately sixty people in attendance, and I was able to use the panel as a platform to promote the work of community partner organizations across Cleveland. Reflecting on my virtual program, I wrote a brief and presented it to my fellow interns on the last day of the internship. It was a great opportunity to share my work and learn about the amazing work the other interns had done in their communities across the country.

The CHCI summer internship confirmed my aspirations for a future career in public policy, and I will never forget the experience. I am sincerely grateful to have received the Wellman Hill Grant and been able to give back to my community while growing as a leader and acquiring skills and knowledge. I feel especially lucky to have had this opportunity in spite of the global pandemic. Therefore, I wish to thank Liz Hill and the entire selection committee for the Wellman Hill Grant.