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## CONGRESS PROVIDES WORK EXPERIENCE FOR STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

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Student interns have long played an essential role in almost every congressional office and have benefited from the experience. Now, thanks to the team effort of the U.S. Congress and Virginia's George Mason University (GMU), the **Congressional Internship Program for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities (CIIID)** extends this unique Hill experience to some students who otherwise would not likely have the opportunity.



Rep. Gregg Harper (MS-3)

Initially launched in 2010 through the coordinated efforts of Congressman Gregg Harper (MS-3), the Committee on House Administration (CHA), and GMU's LIFE Program, CIIID has expanded to Senate and committee offices.

According to Harper, "The Congressional Internship Program for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities was a similar concept to an internship program that I began in my law practice back home in Mississippi before coming to Washington, D.C. The program fosters independence and teaches interns workplace skills that can translate to permanent employment. Perhaps more importantly, the program demonstrates what people with disabilities are capable of achieving when given the opportunity. For some offices on the Hill, their intern is the first person they may have ever met with an intellectual disability. Being a part of this program has not only opened their minds, but their hearts as well. It's very special to me to see these interns walking in the halls of the House office buildings, and to see them when they drop by my office just to say 'hello.' "

South Carolina Senator Tim Scott's experience with CIIID interns has been a huge success. He commented, "We have been incredibly impressed with their work ethic and eagerness to learn, so much so that one of our interns has been hired as a part-time staff member."



Sen. Tim Scott (SC)



Rep. Eliot Engel (NY-16)

Congressman Eliot Engel (NY-16) would like to raise awareness about the program and encourage more organizations to participate: "The Program has been a great partner to me and my office, and has provided some truly excellent interns. The program has given both LIFE interns and office staff an opportunity to work with and learn from one another."

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CIPIID interns are students aged 18-23 with intellectual disabilities, who are enrolled in the GMU four-year LIFE academic program. Through their classwork and life-skills training, LIFE students learn about the working world. Each intern commits to working 2-4 hours, one day per week for a semester. GMU provides each intern with a mentor, usually another GMU student, to accompany them around the Capitol Hill complex and assist them with understanding assignments.

According to LIFE program coordinator Andrew Hahn, “CIPIID has done wonders for our Mason LIFE students. It increases their confidence and work endurance, in addition to molding their professionalism so that they are better prepared for employment upon graduation from the LIFE Program.”

GMU LIFE senior Sean Reidt interned in the Congressional Office of Compliance (OOC) this fall semester. According to OOC Executive Director Barbara J. Sapin, “Sean was an excellent addition to our staff and he willingly took on multiple assignments from every division in our agency. It was a pleasure to work with him.”

More than 100 Congressional offices have participated in CIPIID. To learn more about the Program, or how your office can participate, visit the CHA website: <http://cha.house.gov>.

For information on the Americans with Disabilities Act as incorporated in the Congressional Accountability Act, visit [www.compliance.gov](http://www.compliance.gov), follow us on Twitter [@LegBranch\\_OOC](https://twitter.com/LegBranch_OOC), or call 202-724-9250.



OOC LIFE Intern, Sean Reidt