

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Chairman, last week the House of Representatives passed the Workforce Investment Act, a reauthorization bill short-changing job training programs in America. A current beneficiary of WIA funds is the Youth Community Technology Program administered by Korean American Community Services on the northwest side of Chicago. I am very proud to represent this organization in Congress because it has a proven record of success by helping hundreds of young people in my district learn how to build and maintain computers, gain valuable experience through internships in area non-profit organizations, and benefit from the experience and companionship of professionals working in the information technology industry.

Regrettably, the Youth Community Technology Program recently lost all WIA support to serve students, and funding to serve youth not in school was severely reduced. The consequences of diminished federal investment in youth workforce development are easily observed at the local level: Eight of 29 local WIA youth programs for in-school youth, including the Youth Community Technology Program, were eliminated in response to a 20 percent cut in federal WIA Youth Program appropriations in fiscal year 2003. As a result of these cuts, more than 150 youth were enrolled in these programs. These young people will not have the opportunities provided to Mario Argueta, one of my constituents and a participant in the Youth Community Technology Program. Without these important programs, young people like Mario could join the ranks of the more than 80,000 Chicago youth ages 16 to 24 who have dropped out of school and remain out of work or are at risk to violence, delinquency, early pregnancy, and dependency.

The bill passed by the House last week cuts WIA Youth Program formula funds, and this could have a direct impact young Americans like Mario and the community organizations that serve them. Young people deserve increased federal investment in education and training, not another funding cut. Additionally, diverting one quarter of WIA Youth Program formula funds to create discretionary "Challenge Grants" would result in yet another round of severe cuts for local providers who depend on this money to serve youth like Mario. Any new grant created through reauthorization of the WIA Youth Program must be created with additional funds, not by diverting formula funds, in order to allow providers who are already meeting the challenge to continue their critical work.

The United States is currently experiencing a jobs recession in which 2.5 million Americans have lost their jobs in the last two years, including two million in the manufacturing sector. Unemployment in Illinois has reached 6.6 percent with 17,400 jobs lost in the last month alone. It is important now more than ever to ensure that the unemployed and those workers who want to improve their skills and participate in the new economy can look forward to a future in which they can achieve the American dream for themselves and their families.

Mr. Chairman, Mario Argueta is a young man pursuing that dream. He wrote the following letter about how the Youth Community Technology Program has changed his life for the better and which I now submit for the RECORD.

THE WAY MY LIFE IS GOING NOW IS JUST PERFECT

(By Mario Argueta, participant in the Youth Community Technology Program)

My name is Mario Argueta. I was born in the city of Chicago during the summer of 1985. When I was 2 and a half months old my mother sent me to live with my grandmom in Guatemala. I grew up over there and did pretty well in school. I completed eighth grade, then my mom decided to bring me back to the United States.

I came back to the Chicago to live with my mom, when I was 13 years old. Because of language problems, I had to repeat the 8th grade. I attended Irving Park Middle School for 4 months. I graduated from eighth grade, then I started going to Edwin G Foreman H.S. It was difficult for me, because I did not speak English and could hardly understand. I was doing really badly, my grades were very low, and I had a lot of problems at home. I dropped out of high school because I got desperate and felt that I could not improve. But I knew I was a good kid with no bad habits. I was smart and also respectful to people. I realized that I needed some help.

Someone told me about Antonia Pantoja Alternative High School. I applied, passed the entrance test, and started attending that school. My grades started to improve because of all the help I was getting. There were a lot of people helping me in class, after school, during lunch, and sometimes on Saturdays. I accepted the help because I wanted a good future. My social worker at Antonia Pantoja told me about Youth Community Technology Program (YCTP). When I got in touch with them, I found out that my old English teacher at Antonia Pantoja was working as the education coordinator at YCTP.

After being accepted into the program, I went to YCTP after school, four days a week, for about three months. I had a good time, and learned a lot about computers. After teaching me how to build computers and maintain operating systems, YCTP matched me with an internship. Right now, I am working on the internship at a non-profit agency called "Computers For Schools". So far, everything is going great. While working there I have gained a lot of skills in different areas, especially in hardware. Sometimes we work on machines that need network cards, sound cards, or video cards. Sometimes we have to "ghost hard drives," which means copy an operating system to them, or sometimes wipe the hard-drives. I have fixed more than 25 machines. I work with a variety of systems. Now, I can understand a lot of things that I wouldn't have even imagined before. I have work experience to put on my resume, and am also giving something back to the community.

My long-term goal is to get a degree from a college and make the rest of my life comfortable. I still attend Antonia Pantoja right now and will graduate in two more semesters, but I'm close enough to feel like a winner already. Even though I am still learning a lot of things, the way my life is going now is just perfect.

TRIBUTE TO REV. AIMEE G. CORTESE

HON. JOSÉ E. SERRANO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 14, 2003

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to pay tribute to Rev. Aimee G. Cortese, who

will be honored at a gala later this month for her exemplary life and service in active ministry around the world. She is best known in the South Bronx area, where for 16 years she was Associate Minister to her father, Rev. Rafael Garcia, of the Spanish Assemblies of God. Rev. Cortese has remained committed to the South Bronx community where she was raised, working with her brother, former Congressman Bob Garcia. She now serves as Founder and Pastor Emeritus of Crossroads Tabernacle, which will be celebrating its anniversary on May 29, 2003. She is also a mother of four children, who are all in active ministry.

Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to insert into the RECORD the biography of Rev. Aimee Garcia Cortese in recognition of her leadership, commitment to her community and extraordinary contributions, and in wishing her continued success.

Rev. Aimee G. Cortese is a dynamic, down-to-earth speaker who leaves the listener with the experience that Jesus is a reality. Her life speaks her theology—her foundation is the Bible. Rev. Cortese is both a wife and the mother of 4 children, giving her the experience of both home and family. Her preaching and teaching ministry placed her in great demand in churches, women's groups and colleges throughout the nation. Her message is timely, Christ-centered, and with a sensitivity towards human need. She ministers with a burden for souls and a determination to reach, to touch, and to share Jesus with people from all walks of life.

Rev. Cortese has been engaged in active evangelism both in the United States and throughout the world. Rev. Cortese is best known in the New York City area. For 16 years, she was Associate Minister to her father, Rev. Rafael Garcia of the Spanish Assemblies of God. Rev. Cortese has remained committed to the South Bronx community where she was raised, working with her brother Congressman Robert Garcia. In her own words, street ministry was her specialty and desire, "I want to be where the people are, that is where Jesus is."

Outside the U.S., Rev. Cortese and her husband Joseph Sr. both served with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Team in South America. She was a delegate to the First Congress on Evangelism in West Berlin, Germany.

Rev. Cortese broke ground as the first female Chaplain for the NYS Department of Corrections and ministered in this capacity for ten years. She worked with both male and female inmates at the Ossining Correctional Facility (Sing-Sing) for men, and Bedford Hills for women.

With ten years of Chaplaincy behind her, she felt qualified to push ahead with a strong preventative work with both young people and adults. She did prison work on a volunteer basis.

For the past 18 years, Rev. Cortese was Pastor of Crossroads Tabernacle, a thriving work in The Bronx, NY. This church serves as a counseling center to meet the needs of the community, and all who may need help. She now serves as Founder and Pastor Emeritus of Crossroads Tabernacle. Rev. Cortese continues to speak at whatever events she is invited to. Hearing Rev. Aimee G. Cortese is an experience long to be remembered.