Tyler Hunter – Tuition Legislation

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A WKU student played a huge role in making changes to Kentucky’s tuition waiver program for foster children.

It was a cause very near and dear to his heart as Amy Bingham explains in this week’s View from the Hill.

“I have with me Mr. Tyler Hunter Boards did I get that right?”

 “I was nervous! It’s not like I was this big, tough guy or nothing like that.”

WKU Junior Tyler Hunter found himself testifying before the Senate Education Committee last winter.

The goal? Extend the time period for fostered and adopted students to obtain a college degree tuition free.

 “What this bill does is it changes it from five solid years to 150 consecutive or non-consecutive credit hours.”

 “We just felt young people needed more availability to and freedom to also work on not just their educational goals but life goals, you know, trying to figure out who they are and what they want to do.”

It’s legislation that certainly hits close to home for Tyler.

 “I grew up in the child welfare system. I was in kinship care and then in foster care. Lived in several different homes between relatives and foster care.”

At the age of sixteen, Tyler was adopted.

 “With that I gained permanency, I gained a mom, a family that wasn’t just gonna throw me back out there because they got tired of me. So this journey is very personal to me.”

More than three years ago, Tyler was asked to serve on a youth leadership council called Voices of the Commonwealth. A position he came close to quitting.

 “But I hung on in there because I was like, you know, someone has to have a voice you know and I’m in that position.”

Last year, one of the goals the council identified to work on was how to extend the tuition waiver.

 “By the time we were working on it, I was in my last year of the waiver. Still had no degree, no associates. So I was like oh my gosh we’ve got to do something.”

“Thank you all very much”

Not long after the hearing, Senate Bill 115 passed in both the house and senate and was signed into law by Governor Beshear in April.

 “It was a huge project, a lot of long nights, early mornings and we got it taken care of.”

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.

Hunter is majoring in sociology and criminology and is planning to pursue both a masters and doctorate degree.

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