



2018 HANNAH BERNARD MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

We are pleased to announce the winner of the first Hannah Bernard Memorial Scholarship

[Katherine Herbert of Washington DC.](#)

We wish Katherine all the best in her academic endeavors and thank her for all she does to give back to the complex pain community. We also sincerely thank everyone who submitted an application and extend our love and gratitude to the Bernard Family.



I have had chronic pain my entire life and was diagnosed with EDS, POTS and Mitochondrial Disease when I was twelve years old. These diagnoses totally controlled my life for the over three years that I was bed-bound. Eventually, with the right medications and exercise, I was finally able to go back to school and start my first year of high school. From that point on, I knew it was my job to pay it forward for those who also suffer from chronic illness and chronic pain. The following summer, five years ago, I began working as a volunteer with the newly formed Dysautonomia International and have been working with them ever since. I eventually worked my way up to be an executive assistant to Ellen Kessler, one of the founders of the organization. I have also been given the amazing opportunity to develop the

teen program for their annual conference. This involves not only working with teens and young adults who are struggling, but also connecting them with people like me who are now thriving while living with chronic illness. This mentorship program is my way of trying to give these kids a positive role model who can help them through their roughest times, which is something I wish I could have had.

I was fortunate enough to get into a fantastic school called Grinnell College, in Grinnell, Iowa; two flights and two-hour drive from my home in Washington D.C. Now in my second year at this institution, I have been given amazing opportunities to work even more on giving back to those with disabilities. I am fortunate enough to be able to call myself an “Access Leader” at Grinnell College. This leadership position has many different roles and responsibilities, but our overarching focus is to create a campus that is accessible to all students with disabilities. This responsibility includes auditing buildings on campus, followed by a written report on what can be done to improve its accessibility. I am very proud to say that one of our first reports directly changed the blueprints to a new building for the campus, making it more accessible.

There are many things that I am doing with my life now that I have more control over my body and its pain, but I will never forget how hard it was to overcome and move forward from the most difficult moments in my adolescence. Now, I will work my absolute hardest to create a better world for everyone who is struggling with disability, and more specifically, chronic pain.

The Hannah Bernard Scholarship would greatly help me to achieve my educational goals. A major reason why I decided to attend Grinnell College was that the disability services they provide far surpass those at any other college I looked at. The college, as I have stated in my previous essay, has also given me the amazing opportunity to continue my advocacy work and also to create a more accessible space for current and future students. I plan on graduating from Grinnell College in the Spring of 2020 with a degree in Political Science and a concentration in Peace and Conflict Studies. I hope to use my degree to do more political advocacy for people with disabilities, not only in the United States but also across the world, where many people are struggling to have their governments acknowledge that disability rights are human rights.

The one downside to my college is that it is incredibly expensive, and it has been very difficult to find the funds to complete my tuition despite the grants and loans that I have been awarded. This is not only due to the high sticker price, but also because of the years of high medical expenses for me and my mother, who also struggles with several chronic illnesses and chronic pain. If I would be so lucky as to receive this scholarship, I would be very happy to take some of the burden off of my parents, which would not only be a huge relief for them but for me as well.