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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 24, 2011

Somali Community Access Network
700 Morse Road
Suite 101
Columbus, Ohio 43214

Dear Friends:

Although I can't be with you this evening, I would like to extend my congratulations as you gather for the Second Annual Ohio Somali Graduation program to celebrate the graduation of Somali-American students from high school and college.

Today marks years of perseverance, hard work and support from families and loved ones. As graduates, you have garnered the skills to be employable, independent and important members of society. Your graduation is truly a first step toward a future of achievement ripe with possibilities.

This event also celebrates the importance of community and allows those in the Columbus area to experience the richness of Somali culture. Central Ohio is home to the largest Somali community in the U.S. outside Minneapolis, and I am proud to represent the more than 45,000 Somali-Americans in Ohio. In its second year, the Ohio Somali Graduation program fosters unity in society through the exploration of Somali culture and tradition while highlighting academic success.

Somali refugees bring with them a wealth of knowledge, talent, hard work, enthusiasm and diversity. To use these assets to best benefit themselves, families and communities, these newcomers need to get support in finding services they need and learning to navigate throughout this whole complex new system and completely different setting. Somali Community Access Network (SomaliCAN) and Somali Education Association (SOMEA) have been formed to address these challenges and assist in meeting unique needs.

Once again, congratulations on this special event. I wish you all the best in the years to come.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

SB: jmp