

**Testimony of Yasmine Issa  
Before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pension Committee  
Hearing on Federal Spending on For-Profit Education  
June 24, 2010**

Thank you for inviting me to speak today. My name is Yasmine Issa. I thought that going to school to learn a marketable skill would allow me to provide for my family. Instead, it has left me more than \$20,000 in debt, and unable to be hired in the field I trained for.

In 2005, I was 24 years old and recently divorced, with 3-year-old twin girls. I needed a good job in order to support myself and the twins, but I had been a stay-at-home mom up to that point, and I didn't have a college degree or any professional training. My aunt works in the radiology department at a hospital, and told me that was a promising and rewarding path, so I started looking online for ultrasound schools.

I found a Sanford-Brown Institute in White Plains, near my home in Yonkers, NY, and went to the campus and spoke with a school representative. The first day I went to visit, I was told to take an entrance exam, which I passed. They said I needed at least 32 college credits to enter the program, and I already had 59 credits from when I attended Manhattanville College for two years, so that wasn't a problem.

The program was 12 months of accelerated classes plus a six-month internship in a doctor's office and or hospital. The recruiters explained that I could sit for the certification exam by either having a bachelor's degree or working full time for one year as an ultrasound sonographer. They made it sound so easy, and they assured me I would have no problem finding a job to meet this requirement as soon as I completed the program. They said that career services at the school wouldn't stop until I had a position. Their job placement services sounded really helpful, so it seemed like a sure thing.

The recruiters kept calling me and pressuring me to sign up for the program. They said that the seats were filling fast and the registration deadline was just days away. With a family to take care of, I didn't have time to waste being unemployed, and I needed skills, so I decided to enroll, and I was very excited about my new career.

The program cost me a little over \$32,000. I paid for a lot of the costs with savings and child support, but I also had to take out \$15,000 in federal student loans through Sallie Mae. Using some of the child support money that I received for my daughters was the only way I could pay for school, but I believed going back to school and getting trained would yield a good return on my investment.

After a lot of hard work, I completed the program in June of 2008. I began looking for a job aggressively, applying for every ultrasound job in the tri-state area. I posted my resume on Monster.com and other job hunting web sites. In the beginning I would call to check in with Michelle Rawlins, the lady in charge of job placement at Sanford-Brown. I told her where I applied and asked her if there was anything else I should do. She told me

to just keep looking and check in with her every week. She said she would fax my resume to any job openings she was aware of. She sent one or two emails to my entire class with job openings, and I applied for those as well. Overall, career services didn't end up being very helpful at all.

After a few months, I was getting the same answers everywhere I went. The hospitals and doctors offices all wanted one of two requirements: either for the ultrasound tech to be certified by the American Registry for Diagnostic Medical Sonographers (ARDMS), or to have two to five years of experience working as an ultrasound tech. But I couldn't sit for the registry's exam until I had experience, and I couldn't get real experience without being certified.

The more I didn't use my ultrasound skills, the more I was losing the skills. I asked Michelle Rawlins if I could get another internship in a hospital to keep up my skills and better my chances of being hired there. She transferred me to the dean of the school, who sounded sympathetic but never followed up or returned my calls. I tried in all kinds of ways to get help from Sanford Brown, but they avoided me and had nothing to offer.

When I visited a hospital in New Jersey, the supervising ultrasound tech informed me that if I had attended an accredited school, I would have been able to sit for the registry exam immediately after graduating. This was how I found out that Sanford-Brown Institute's ultrasound program was not accredited. The school as a whole is accredited, but their ultrasound program is not. I couldn't believe it.

I looked on the ARDMS web site and found that Bergen Community College in New Jersey offers an accredited ultrasound program for about half what I paid Sanford-Brown. I called to see if I could take a few more ultrasound courses through Bergen so I could qualify to sit for the registry exam. I was told no, because my credits wouldn't transfer.

I never felt so low in my life. Five months after finishing the program, I had no prospects for employment, but still had a family to take care of, rent, bills, and now the outstanding student loans. I was depressed, I felt like I wasted my time and money on a phony school, and fell for their false promises.

I went online to see if there were any complaints about Sanford-Brown, and found several from students in New York and across the United States. Their stories were, if not exactly the same, very similar to mine. They all felt like victims of a scam, just like I did.

It has now been two years since I completed the program and the interest on my unpaid loans is growing. I currently owe a little over \$21,000, including about \$4,000 from my two years of college. The closest I have come to a real ultrasound job was the two months when I worked as a temp for a private doctor while his ultrasound tech was on vacation. It's hard to find any work without a marketable skill, but going to Sanford-Brown to get one has left my family and me worse off than if I had never gone back to school.