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Press Releases

The Council for Opportunity in Education Congratulates Senator-elect and TRIO Alumnus Rev. Raphael Warnock on a Historic Election Victory

January 6, 2021

Warnock will become the fifth TRIO alumnus in the 117th Session and first Senator to serve in the U.S. Congress

Today the Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) congratulates Senator-elect Reverend Raphael G. Warnock on his historic election victory. The recipient of COE's 2007 National TRIO Achiever Award, Warnock will go to Washington as the first Black senator from Georgia.

In the days leading up to the January 5 run-off election, Warnock recalled his experience as student in TRIO's Upward Bound program and its influence on his political aspirations. "When I was in high school, I was a part of Upward Bound — a federal program to help first-generation students go to college. I know personally how important it is to have good representation in the United States Senate. Serving in the Senate would allow me to pay it forward," [wrote](#) Warnock.

Warnock is an alumnus of the Upward Bound program at Savannah State University. Upward Bound is one of the five [Federal TRIO Programs](#) (TRIO), which enable low-income and first-generation students access and succeed in college.

Pushed by his parents to work hard and building on the foundation crafted by TRIO, Warnock left Savannah and went onto Morehouse College in Atlanta — ultimately becoming the first member of his family to graduate from college. He earned a Ph.D. in theology that led to a career in the pulpit, eventually as head pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, where the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was baptized, ordained, and served as pastor.

"From Kayton Home Projects to [Reverend Dr. Martin Luther] King's pulpit — that's what TRIO does!" Warnock shared with TRIO educators when he spoke at the 2020 meeting of the Southeastern Association of Educational Opportunity Program Personnel in Atlanta.

Reflecting on Warnock's victory, COE President Maureen Hoyler stated, "TRIO levels the playing field for students from disadvantaged families who often lack support for high school completion and the pursuit of a college degree. An overlooked aspect of the programs is how these programs helped officials around the country develop leadership skills necessary for public service."

When Warnock takes his oath of office, he will become the fifth TRIO alumnus to serve in the 117th Session of Congress and the first Senator. He will join fellow TRIO alumni U.S. Representatives Gwen Moore (D-WI-4), Ilhan Omar (D-MN-5), Steven Horsford (D-NV-4), and Nikema Williams (D-GA-5).



The Council for Opportunity in Education's mission is to achieve college access and success for low-income students, first-generation students, and students with disabilities.

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