



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Terrence Murphy

## Murphy announces Peekskill HS senior nominated for US Presidential Scholars Program

TERRENCE MURPHY December 2, 2017

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Peekskill, NY - Alicia Keys, Jodie Foster, Weird Al Yankovic and Senator Amy Klobuchar all graduated at the top of their class in high school. Peekskill High School senior Valentina Loaiza, ranked first in her class of 247, is heading toward the same lofty accomplishment. Recognizing Valentina's potential, Senator Terrence Murphy recently nominated her for the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program. Senator Murphy is pleased to announce Valentina has been selected as one of the twenty-five New York State high school seniors nominated for

the President Scholars Program.

Recognition as a Presidential Scholar is one of the nation's highest honors a high school student can achieve. Every year, one young man and one young woman from each state are named Presidential Scholars.

"I am extremely proud that Valentina Loaiza, a Peekskill High School student in the 40th Senate District, has been nominated for the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program," said Senator Murphy. "She has shown a strong commitment to serving her community through her volunteer work and has devoted herself to helping our immigrant population through her work with CUNY Citizenship Now. Valentina is a sterling example of how hard work can yield positive results. I thank Commissioner MaryEllen Elia for selecting her for the next phase of the competition."

Michelle Rios, a Peekskill High School Counselor and Valentina's mentor said, "Congratulations to Valentina Loaiza for her nomination for the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program! Valentina has worked tremendously hard and has remained steadfast and focused throughout high school. She is a leader, an advocate and the perfect student to potentially receive this award. She is destined for greatness."

"I am thrilled to be nominated for the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program," said Valentina. "I think this is an amazing opportunity to represent my school. Peekskill has been underrepresented throughout the years and I believe this will open doors for my peers to take action and demonstrate their potential."

Valentina is a conscientious student who has excelled in every aspect of her academic life.

She is ranked first in a class of 247 students, has a GPA of 99.69 and is the Vice President of the Science Honor Society. In addition to achieving academic excellence, Valentina has distinguished herself in serving her community. Valentina has volunteered at the ASPCA, Special Olympics, and the Peekskill Library, and has tutored both children and adults. She was equally devoted to her work with CUNY Citizenship Now, a free legal immigration service. Valentina worked at the annual call-in where she was trained to provide information about how and where people could begin the process of becoming a citizen. For her dedication to community service, Valentina received the Prudential President's Service Award.

The Presidential Scholar recognition is one of the nation's highest honors for high school students. Established in 1964 by President Lyndon Johnson, the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program honors the nation's most accomplished high school seniors on the basis of outstanding scholarship. The program was extended to recognize students who demonstrate exceptional talent in the visual, creative and performing arts in 1979. In 2015, the program was expanded to recognize student excellence in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs.

Students selected by the Commissioner of Education will be invited to apply in January 2018 by letter from the Commission on Presidential Scholars and the U.S. Department of Education. Students chosen as U.S. Presidential Scholars receive an expense-paid trip to Washington, D. C. in June and the U.S. Presidential Scholars medallion at a ceremony sponsored by the White House.