

Bailey L. Garrett
408 Candlelight Dr APT D
Kenai, Alaska 99611

ESSAY PROMPT: Who or what in your educational or life experience has influenced your direction in life? (750 words maximum)

Growing up, I endured abuse that left invisible scars no one could see. The kind of pain that teaches you to shrink inside your own body. I was forced to navigate a world where trust could shatter in a single moment, and safety wasn't a guarantee. But through that darkness, I discovered something unexpected: empathy. I knew I never wanted another person to feel alone in their pain. That understanding planted the seed that would grow into my dream of becoming a nurse. Nursing, to me, isn't just about medicine — it's about presence. It's about being there in people's worst moments and helping them find strength when they feel like they have none. I want to be the person I wish I had in my corner — someone steady, compassionate, and unafraid of the dark places. My first opportunity to test that calling came this year at my job.

I'm sitting beside a resident in the assisted living facility where I work. Her breaths are slow and uneven. The monitor is off. There are no alarms—she has a DNR. That means I don't get to try to save her.

I sit there, holding her hand, as she slips away. This is the first time I've watched someone die. I want to do something—anything—but I can't. I was trained to take vitals and respond to emergencies, but no one taught me how to sit in this moment and just be here. No one told me how loud silence can feel when someone is taking their last breath right beside you. "You're not alone," I whisper.

As painful as this is, every part of me wants to be a nurse.

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That moment shook me, but it also gave me purpose. She didn't die alone. Someone cared enough to be there. That mattered. I want to be a nurse who brings that same presence to every patient—whether helping them heal or ensuring they leave this world with dignity. That experience confirmed what I already knew: *I was made for this.*

I will begin my education at Kenai Peninsula College before transferring to UAA to complete my Bachelors of Science in Nursing, allowing me to keep working and serving my community. After earning my degree, I hope to work at Central Peninsula Hospital. Working at my local hospital will allow me to give back directly to the community that helped me heal. The Kenai Peninsula needs dedicated healthcare providers who understand the people and culture of this area. After gaining experience, I hope to pursue travel nursing with a focus on serving Native communities throughout Alaska. I want to be part of the solution by helping provide quality, culturally respectful care.

I come from a place where education isn't guaranteed and opportunities don't come easily. But I'm ready to fight for my future — to break the cycle I was born into and build something better. I will be a first generation college student. With your support, I can become the kind of nurse who heals not just with medicine, but with empathy. And in doing so, I'll become everything I was meant to be. This scholarship would not only ease the financial weight that college brings, but it would also be a reminder that my story doesn't end with trauma. It would be a vote of confidence that says: I believe in your future. With your help, I'll step into a profession where I can bring healing.