

As an aspiring physician, some of the greatest obstacles on my journey thus far has been access to resources and being self-reliant to a fault. Upon reflection I've realized my upbringing in the south side of Chicago played a role in shaping my self-reliant nature. Although this quality has benefited me in many ways, I understand now that the road to becoming a physician is a journey of a thousand miles that no should have to walk alone. After I became an I Am Abel mentee in March 2020, my only regret was that I did not found a support system of this caliber much earlier in my journey as I know it would have made a world of a difference. Now, I want to introduce the I Am Abel foundation to other aspiring physicians with similar backgrounds as me so that they never have to walk alone.

As someone who schooled on the South side of Chicago throughout my adolescent years, I witnessed firsthand how much unrealized potential lie within the youth in our inner cities. Undoubtedly, I know there are thousands of students who have the potential to become our future leaders in medicine. However, far too often their potential is unrealized due to lack of resources, role models, amongst other socioeconomic factors. I have been fortunate enough to continue to pursue my purpose in making a difference in the lives of others through medicine and want to help others do the same.

If offered this position the first issue I would like to tackle is the sub-par academic foundation that students in the south side of Chicago are subjected to. During my years in University, I found my intellect was up to par in comparison to my peers, but my poor academic foundation from middle and high school hindered me from competing at the same level of many of my peers particularly in the sciences. Furthermore, I am a firm believer in the power of representation. It is one thing to dream about becoming a physician but seeing someone who comes from the same community that has achieved this goal, makes one's dream feel much more

attainable. If selected as a Mentee leader I plan to implement initiatives that will bridge the educational gap inner city schools and build other critical skills required to succeed as a physician. I believe if we start to address these issues in our inner cities from as early as middle school, the more future physicians will sprout from our own communities. Ultimately my reason behind seeking a position as a mentee leader is to play my part in creating equity for black and brown youth in medicine.