

## **Isaac Carreno, NC – 2022**

The United States Senate Youth Program was an innovative and transformational experience. As I applied to the program, I was excited for an in-person experience in March. I was disappointed to learn that the program was shifting to an all-virtual format, however, the experience was just as memorable as I could have imagined.

As the program started, and my fellow delegates and I began our week-long immersion into the inner workings of our nation's government, I was filled with joy and excitement. The program was filled with countless leaders in our nation that are working everyday to create a "more perfect Union." Whether I learned about the justice system through Associate Attorney General Vanita Gupta, or about the implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill by Secretary Pete Buttigieg, the conversations were genuine and informative. We discussed some of the most pertinent issues of the world today and issues that fellow delegates and I are most passionate about.

Perhaps the most memorable part of the experience has been the engagement and collaboration with a group of 103 other leaders in our nation. It was refreshing to see their visions and goals for the future of our nation and world. We all come from different backgrounds and have different perspectives, but we are all driven by the notion of change. The most pressing message of the experience has been to learn to listen and understand each other in our world.

Amidst some of the most polarized and divisive times that we are experiencing, hearing every leader and speaker say that we must reach across ideological lines and come to agreements was incredibly refreshing. All of our leaders and speakers came from various areas of government and had very different perspectives, but they all discussed the idea of bipartisanship and unity. As I took notes, listened to our speakers, and engaged through questions, I felt as if I was part of the next generation of leaders that seek to make a difference. The program was informative, insightful, engaging, and above all else, it was unforgettable. We must work together to create a "more perfect Union." The United States Senate Youth Program has enabled me to learn from leaders and continue to work toward these goals and aspirations.