

Theresa Utton

Subject: FW: VIT funding FY16 budget

From: Kevin Mayor []
Sent: Thursday, March 05, 2015 10:55 AM
To: Theresa Utton
Subject: VIT funding FY16 budget

Dear Chair Mitzi Johnson and House Appropriations Committee,

My name is Kevin Mayor and I have been a technician for Vermont Interactive Technologies (VIT) for two years. It is very unfortunate to hear that the budget for FY 16 calls for the elimination of funding for VIT because in such a relatively short time I have seen countless Vermonters benefit from the video conferencing technology offered by VIT. It brings education and opportunities to within easy reach of Vermonters who would normally lack the access and knowledge to participate using any other technology.

One of our most common conferences is with the many students of Vermont Technical College's nursing and medical programs, all of whom have been horrified to hear of VIT's possible elimination because of how much farther it would mean they would need to drive. Without VIT to bring these classes within driving distance these students might be forced to move or even abandon their nursing aspirations to the detriment of a medical field in dire need of more nurses.

The most common argument against the funding of VIT is the increase in popularity of online video streaming services like Skype. This belief indicates a lack of understanding of many Vermonters' situations, such as older Vermonters who lack the technological knowledge to set up such devices and software properly, and many more Vermonters for whom quality Internet access is still out of reach. I myself am an example of a very large number of people living in rural Vermont for whom high speed Internet is still not available. For lack of any other options I receive Internet access at home through Hughes.net satellite Internet, which is frankly a terrible service that has very restrictive speed, latency (delay) and data usage limits that make real-time video streaming literally impossible. It's also well known that even in areas where DSL or cable Internet access is available the speeds are often much lower than national averages, which can easily severely degrade the quality of real-time streaming video. VIT offers a quality-controlled and technician supported environment specifically set up for high quality real-time video communication with no need for any technical proficiency on the part of participants, and with studios across the state VIT is always available no matter where Vermonters live.

With the continuing struggle to get education and opportunities to a state spread thin it makes no sense to scrap existing infrastructure ideal for doing just that. Vermont Interactive Technologies is critical to Vermonters' educational future. Please support restoring funding for VIT in the new budget. Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,

Kevin Mayor
West Glover, VT 05875