

Dear Chair Kitchel and Senate Appropriations Committee,

My name is Christine Pettinato. In 2014, I graduated from Johnson State College with a Bachelors in Psychology and I currently work at the University of Vermont Medical Center. I went to college thinking, as most do, that afterwards I would get a great job that would allow me to afford a good quality of life here in Vermont, but I've begun to realize that's not always the case. The cost of living in Vermont is so high it's often difficult to make ends meet and many weeks I work overtime to try to stay afloat. Part of this high cost of living is health and dental insurance, which has become increasingly difficult to afford. With my high student debt, I just don't have the extra funds to pay toward health care services even though I need them.

When I was younger, my parents owned an event business that got hit hard when the economy crashed. They were struggling to pay bills, and especially to pay for healthcare for themselves and their children. Dr. Dynasaur saved us. I had a chronic condition that required me to need multiple surgeries. I was able to get the care I needed without it leading to debilitating debt for my family. It also provided us with dental coverage, so my siblings and I could go to the dentist without having to worry about the bills stacking up. For my family, and many families across the state, this program provide years of high quality, affordable health and dental coverage that we otherwise would not have had.

Recently, a campaign called Dr. Dynasaur 2.0 has launched to ask the legislature to fund a study to look at expanding the existing program to include children and young adults up through age 26 regardless of income. As a young adult paying for the high costs of health and dental care, on top of student debt and other life expenses, I can say this would be so incredibly beneficial to me and so many other Vermonters in my shoes and I fully support this initiative.

Thank you,
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