

Sterling College

Working Hands. Working Minds.

March 25, 2015

Senator Anne Cummings, Chair
Senate Education Committee
Vermont State House

Dear Senator Cummings and members of the Senate Education Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Trustees of Sterling College to express our deep concern about Senate Bill 142 introduced by Senator Pollina that proposes to limit grants and scholarships awarded by the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation only to those students who attend Vermont State Colleges, the University of Vermont, or institutions in states that have a reciprocity agreement with the State of Vermont.

Forty-percent of Sterling College's alumni live in Vermont. This bill, should it be successful passed, would have a negative impact on the capacity of Sterling College, *Vermont's only federally recognized and funded Work College*, to provide Vermonters with access to this important federal program. It is therefore harmful both to Vermont and the Northeast Kingdom.

Approximately half the students who are enrolled at Sterling College are Pell Grant eligible. To ensure that Vermonters have access to the education we provide, the College complements VSAC funds with our own institutional funds. We actively seek to serve students who may be the first in their family to earn a college degree and those for whom earning a college education may otherwise require substantial personal financial sacrifice.

Vermonters should qualify for VSAC support to choose an education that best prepares them to contribute to the wellbeing of our state. As the nation's only environmental stewardship college, we prepare students to address the critical issues of the 21st century. Our alumni work in professional fields and lead businesses that are the backbone of our state's agricultural and tourism economy and they commit their lives to protect our food, water, soil, and climate.

We strongly oppose this bill and ask that the Senate Education Committee reconsider this proposed legislation because of the impact it would have on Vermonters who need VSAC support to help to provide financial access to our state's only federal Work College, or the personal freedom to attend any of Vermont's fine private colleges and universities.

Respectfully,



Matthew A. Derr
President

Cc: Senator Anthony Pollina, Senate Education Committee Members, Scott Giles, VSAC President, VHEC Presidents, Jeb Spaulding, VSC Chancellor, Susan Stitely, AVIC President, Robin Taffler, Executive Director of the Work Colleges Association