

Thank you for allowing me to address you today.

My name is Beth Walsh and I am the Coordinator of Career Development at Johnson State College and the President of the Vermont State Colleges United Professionals, AFT (American Federation of Teachers) Vermont, local 6217, AFL-CIO.

I want to speak to you about the bill H122, sponsored by Matt Hill and co-sponsored by 26 of his colleagues. This bill proposes to increase the annual appropriation for Vermont State Colleges by \$4,000,000.00 in fiscal year 2018 and to adjust future year appropriations for Vermont State Colleges in relation to changes in the "Total General Government" section of the State budget. The Vermont State College United Professionals and AFT-Vermont wants to thank each of the legislators who have shown their commitment to the Vermont State Colleges by co-sponsoring this bill, including On January 24th of this year, Governor Phil Scott also proposed an increase of \$4M to appropriations for the VSC. His proposal, however, was complicated by his efforts to tie this increase to his proposed decrease in the K-12 funding. While it doesn't appear that that part of his proposal will be successful, it is imperative that the State of Vermont, our Governor and our legislators provide the support that our college-seeking Vermonters require. In 1961 the enabling legislation that created the Vermont State College System said the state would support it in "whole or substantial part." (<http://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/16/072/02171>). Appropriations from the state have fallen from 50% in 1980 to the current 16% (<https://29dj2p23zy5gsrxeee4mso9d-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/VSC-Financial-Statements-2016.pdf>) . This puts Vermont near the very bottom of several lists measuring state spending on higher education in our country (http://sheeo.org/sites/default/files/project-files/SHEEO_FY15_Report_051816.pdf). As you can imagine, the Vermont State Colleges have done much over the last 3 and a half decades to tighten our belts, while maintaining high quality educational experiences for our students. In fact, the insufficient funding of the Vermont State College System is of great concern to those of us who work there and for Vermonters who are concerned about the sustainability of our public higher education system. In fact, the most recent accreditation report for Johnson State College submitted by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges states that, although Johnson State College has much to commend it, including a strong commitment to student success, our student leadership development, and our campus-wide voice in governance and planning, "nothing poses a more serious threat to the College's long-term ability to meet the Standards for Accreditation than a lack of sufficient financial and human resources." The many decades of insufficient state appropriations have taken their toll, and it is time for the state to live up to its promise of supporting the Vermont State College System in whole or substantial part. The Vermont State College System depends on it, as do the communities where these institutions reside, and the well-being of our young people and our state.

Thank you for listening. Please support H122.

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