

February 10, 2017

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Dear Appropriations Committee:

I have worked at Lyndon State College for 5 years and have held three different positions. I began as the Assistant to the Dean of Students, then spent 3 years as the Assistant Director of the Center for Rural Entrepreneurship. When that position ended, I accepted my current position in the Student Affairs Office. I have three children, two graduated from college in 2015 and 2016, and my youngest is currently a sophomore in college.

I fully support Chancellor Spaulding's request for a \$4 million increase to the VT State College System. It is woefully overdue and I urge you to support Representative Hill's bill H122. The VSC is very successful in educating Vermonters and preparing them for the workforce and to become productive and successful members of the community. But it's an embarrassing reality that Vermont has one of the **highest in state tuition rates in the country** for public higher education. And this results in our students graduating with higher debt than students from other states. We are doing our students a grave disservice. In my position in the student affairs office at Lyndon State College, I often see students before they withdraw from the school and I try to ask them why they are leaving and what their plans are moving forward. By far the most common reason I receive is that they cannot afford to continue. This means students are leaving without a degree, now carrying debt and will be trying to find a job to support themselves. This is not a recipe for success!

This high tuition also results in our students going out of state for their education because in many cases, it's actually **LESS expensive!** I saw this personally when my own children were applying for college. They had offers from both public and private out of state institutions which were less than the cost of attending a Vermont State College. This is a shame! We should be making it possible for **ANY VERMONT**ER who wants an education, not only to obtain one **HERE IN VERMONT**, but to graduate without the burden of staggering debt.

The truth is the VSC educates more Vermonters who then stay in Vermont after graduation to live and work. It is our responsibility to ensure they receive an affordable, high quality education, our future depends upon it.

Thank you for your consideration of support for H122.

Respectfully,

Christina Cotnoir

