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Hello, my name is Ben Richardson-Skinder and I am a freshman at Montpelier High School. The closer I get to college, the more I understand the lack of funding for higher education, which will ultimately leave thousands of students either without a college diploma or swamped in student loan debt. Making state level college tuition free would push thousands of students to pursue an education and get a good job.

Many high school students statewide, including myself, are faced with the harsh reality that college may be the only feasible way to succeed, but are turned away at the extreme cost that could leave us in debt for the rest of our life. Ranking last out of 50 countries for financial aid given to students, it's no surprise the daunting cost of Vermont college often makes it unrealistic for low and middle income students.

While the bill sounds great, it does raise the question: *Where will we get 10 million dollars a year to fund tuition free college?* An effective and simple solution to this is to tax the wealthy. Although an increase in taxes might seem like it could pressure people to move out of the state, as the taxes are already very high, a tuition free college education would probably keep many people in Vermont, and maybe even urge people to move to here from other states.

Before you take any action on this bill, I urge you to consider this issue from the perspective of a student whose future might rely on an education that they can't pay for. Thousands of students could get an education and a well paying job without ending up with debt that they can never pay off if this bill is passed.

Thank you.

