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Free Tuition Testimonial

The time is now. The push for free tuition for public colleges in Vermont is necessary to keep young minds in Vermont for generations to come. My experience of attending college has been one of hardship and compromise. I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to attend college. I come from a town that is impoverished, with not many residents going to college. I'm the first in my family to ever attend college, and in May, I will be the first to receive a Bachelor's degree. That being said, my family didn't have the money to provide an education for me. Thus, I had to work and pay for it myself. I worked through the entirety of high school, thirty hours a week, and forty in the summers. This instilled good work ethic in me, but also limited my opportunities in high school. After high school, I had enough to pay for a year of college with a substantial amount of loans. Since being in college, I've picked up two additional part time jobs along with a full schedule. It supplemented my out of pocket expenses for the first two years. However, in my third year, I did not have enough to cover the costs after loans, so I had to apply for an additional private loan. I've made several compromises in order to cover the cost of tuition. At twenty-two years old, I've still never owned a car or gotten my license, because I knew I wouldn't be able to afford tuition, car payments, and insurance. With my Pell Grant and an honors scholarship, I'm simply scraping by, but I know many people who weren't lucky enough, ran out of money, and were forced to leave the institution. Public education should mean what the name implies: public. It shouldn't be difficult for individuals to obtain the resources to

complete a four year degree when it's supposed to be the affordable option. Upon graduation, I will really have to weigh my options, and decide if it's fiscally responsible for me to remain in Vermont. I love this state, and would prefer to stay and contribute to the future of the state. It may not be in my best interests with the combination of my loans, the stagnant wages here in Vermont and the high cost of living.

Please invest in Vermont students and Vermont public institutions so that we have an affordable option and we can live and work in Vermont after graduation.