

Testimony by Anna Butcher on Behalf of

S.63 An act relating to expanding dual enrollment to students who attend schools outside of Vermont.

Dear Senator Baruth and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

My name is Anna Butcher. I am a high school senior living in Stamford, Vermont, located on the Massachusetts border. I attend Mount Greylock Regional High School in Williamstown, Massachusetts because my town does not have a high school, and therefore utilizes school choice. I have attended Mount Greylock for three years and have cultivated close relationships with many of the teachers and staff. I have grappled to find the right school situation. After careful deliberation and much research, I decided to enroll in full time classes at CCV Bennington during my senior year in high school to obtain credit towards my diploma. I am currently a dual enrollment student attending classes at CCV.

With the help of the elementary school principal of Stamford, and the principal and guidance counselor at Mount Greylock, I was able to work out a plan for me to attend CCV. I first understood that I would get financial assistance for my endeavor into community college, but I was then told that because I was going to an out of state high school that I would not receive this help. This seems unfair to me that, as a Vermont student, I am unable to access the same educational opportunities that the rest of Vermont students are able to receive. In order to receive financial help through the Dual Enrollment Vouchers, I would have had to transfer to a school in Vermont with a Dual Enrollment coordinator, where the staff wouldn't know me and wouldn't understand my history, where credits may not have transferred in the same way, and where I may not have felt I had the same personal connection with staff. The opportunity for education should not be a burden placed upon the student.

I was discouraged by the lack of support I found from the Vermont Agency of Education and their testimony given by Jess DeCarolis and Emily Bryne. The statement that declares that the bill S63 would undermine the Agency of Education's ability to track dual enrollment students is misleading. Students like me are able to access dual enrollment options through various means, which means that the State will still have to find avenues of tracking dual enrollment students anyway. Additionally, denying me entitlement to the program that I am qualified for in every way but one is discrimination. I live in a border town, and my school district employs school choice. Because of geography and community connections, the majority of students cross state lines for high school. I attend an out of state school because it is the best educational option for me. It is no fault of my own that an instate high school is not a good option for my education. I am asking to receive the same consideration for vouchers that other students in Vermont are granted, in order for me to be able to further my education. The money I'm paying out of pocket for classes represents two months of my salary. The vouchers for my education this year could mean that I would have the ability next year to afford a gap year program that I'm interested in, or go to a college I'm inspired to attend. I would like to have the same opportunity to receive Dual Enrollment Vouchers to further my education as every other Vermont High school student has. I assert that bill S.63 isn't an expansion of the program, but rather a correction to a program that discriminates against Vermont students who attend school across state lines. Thank you for considering corrections to the Vermont Dual Enrollment program put forth in Senate bill S63 to make the Dual Enrollment program and its vouchers available to all Vermont students, including students residing in Stamford and attending public high school.

Respectfully,

Anna Butcher
Stamford Vermont