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Hello, my name is Ryan Heath and I am a senior at Castleton University studying Criminal Justice. I also graduated from CCV Winooski with my associate degree in the summer of 2017. Both of which have shown me the issue at hand which is lack of funding for higher education.

Being a Criminal Justice major at Castleton you are given the opportunity to observe and interact the inmates held in Marble Valley Regional Correctional Facility. My time there I have observed numerous self-help groups and helped with their commissary. These experiences have allowed me to interact with these offenders and ask what got them to where they are at. A common trend I found was they all lacked higher education and their parents did not receive a college education as well. I experienced a story from one man during a self-help group session who said for his birthday his mother offered him heroin. Luckily, he declined because he had previously been serving time at marble valley and received an education which allowed him to obtain a steady job. Receiving a college degree is more than just a diploma, it gives people aspirations and it paves a way for success. It allows people to support their kids more adequately and be a better role model. Higher education must be more affordable to Vermonters so they can have the opportunity to create these aspirations for themselves and reduce the risk factors that lead to a criminal lifestyle. Currently Vermont spends more on corrections than public higher education. If we made public higher education free for Vermonters and we focused our attention on the 40% of Vermonters who don't go on for post-secondary education, we can combat crime in different ways. If we gave low-income Vermonters the hope for a better life early on by making college an option for all people regardless of their background, this would reduce costs in the criminal justice system and support Vermont's economy.

As it stands it is practically impossible for those with problematic or disadvantaged pasts to obtain a degree in the state of Vermont. I personally had a woman in one of my classes at CCV who belonged in that group. She was a hard-working student who would always ask the teacher for clarification and help so that she could understand and produce the best work possible. However, she was limited in her abilities due to the cost of her education and having to support herself and her child. She had a history of substance abuse and she enrolled to CCV to obtain a degree and better herself and get a better job to support her and her family. She worked two jobs just so she could support her kid and get an education. I asked her, "when do you sleep?" she replied, "I don't". This was my first true experience of the severity of our state's issue with higher education. We simply do not fund public institutions enough to allow everyone the same ability to be able to receive a college education. Why should we prevent people from receiving a college education? Why is a state with one of the highest high school graduation rates have just 40% go on to some form of college? We need to invest more into public higher education because it will then allow everyone the equal opportunity to receive a college education. We need to invest more into public higher education because it will produce more educated

and higher paid workers. We need to invest more into public higher education because it will create an overall better quality of life in the state of Vermont.

Thank You for your time.