

Senator Cummings:

I am a long-time Montpelier resident; I grew up in Montpelier and attended Montpelier schools. I understand that you are Chair of the Senate Finance Committee which will be considering Senator Lyon's bill, S.68, at your meeting tomorrow (Tues, Feb 28th). I am writing to express my support for that bill.

I am not an advocate of forgiving school loans; my belief is if a person enters into a contract, he/she is bound by that contract. I think it is unfair -- and it sends a dangerous economic message, to forgive all or even part of a debt the student voluntarily took on. But S.68 is not a loan forgiveness bill; it is a bill that would allow students to treat their student loan as any other business expense one incurs in pursuing one's profession.

I am a recently retired attorney. During the course of my career --and now as an emeritus attorney, I am entitled to deduct the cost of the continuing education I need on my state taxes. S.68 would allow young Vermonters to apply that same deduction to the education they need to pursue their careers.

Vermont has also had a long-standing problem with "brain drain"; for years, a significant number of our best and brightest leave the State because they cannot afford our high cost of living in light of what they can earn here. Whether they pursue technical or professional careers, the tax deduction plan of S.68 would allow those students to stay in Vermont and use their education to grow our demographic and benefit us all.

I strongly support S.68 and look forward to watching its progress both in your committee and in the general Legislature.

Martha Smyrski  
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