

My name is Sebastian Lury. I am a Student Success Advisor on the Castleton Campus of Vermont State University. I am a proud CCV and Lyndon Campus Alumnus. I came from a low-income home, was a first-generation student, and watched all three of my sisters follow me to Lyndon. I saw my mother go back to school as an adult to get her associate's degree from CCV. We even took a college math course together. I married a graduate of the BSN program here at Castleton. To be able to give back to students in the same system that helped shaped me and my family is a powerful opportunity that I do not take lightly. That is, in part, why I serve as Co-President of my local union, VSCUP and as President of Higher Education for AFT Vermont. I am here today to encourage you to support Chancellor Mauch's funding request for the Vermont State College System in the FY26 Vermont State Budget. Access to higher education is vital to keeping Vermonters in Vermont, supporting local businesses, and building strong, vibrant communities. Funding the Vermont State College System in the FY26 Vermont State Budget will give other students and families an opportunity, like it gave me and my family. By funding the VSCS in the FY26 Vermont State Budget you will be making an investment in both our youth and in our future. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.