

**Burns, Vanessa**

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**From:** Konrad Mazurek [kmazurek@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Monday, February 28, 2011 2:40 PM  
**To:** AppropriationTestimony  
**Subject:** Konrad Mazurek HCC Student Testimony Appropriations Committee

Dear appropriations committee chairs and members,

I am here to speak to you on the behalf of nearly 6,000 students of Housatonic Community College. Our school, like many in the Connecticut Community College system is home to as diverse of a student body as one could ever ask for. We have students of all ages, backgrounds, multiple nationalities, religions, and political beliefs.

For all these differences, however; they all are the same in their pursuit of a higher education in the face of the challenges so amply provided by life. In my years at Housatonic I have never heard a student tell me about attending here because his or her family had more money than they knew what to do with. I never heard a student tell me how little determination went into each one of the days they spend at school.

Instead I've heard of students whose jobs were terminated and sent abroad, men and women whose families abandoned them to the world for following their hearts. Young people and old people whose daily struggle isn't deciding between one or the other pair of designer glasses...but whether they get to eat lunch and walk home for an hour, or go hungry through the day and take the bus.

There are no luxuries to cut out here, and there is plenty of damage to do. To make things even worse, many of these students have already been marginalized by the system, some of them more than once. Many of them can tell you about attending high schools whose instructional materials were more than three decades old. Many more that even though they've been promised newer books every year, those books never materialized, as if they weren't good enough for them.

The ones who stand before you are the disciplined and determined few who did not allow themselves to be discouraged by being pushed to the side of the road each year. They believed that should they make their way into college the rest of the way would be clear and their hard work thus far would pay off.

Now after all that hard work they're finding themselves marginalized again, and their government balancing the budgets on their backs while simultaneously asking they work harder, live less, and sacrifice more.

Ladies and gentlemen, we trust you with the stewardship of our cities, our state, and our futures. You cannot build a future by sacrificing your college students' opportunities. Without our schools we cannot reach our utmost potential, and if we cannot innovate, if we cannot push progress...the no amount of budget cutting will save this, or any other state.

I only wish to close with a quote by Robert Shaffer, "We must view **young people** not as empty bottles to be filled but as candles to be lit." If the proposed budget changes go live you will do nothing but hurt these students' progress and this state in the process.

Sincerely

Konrad Mazurek.

HCC Student Senate, President