

Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Michael LaPorte. I am a student at Manchester Community College in Manchester, Connecticut, and a resident of the Town of Glastonbury, House District 31, Senate District 4. I am here tonight to testify about the proposed budget changes to higher education.

I started at MCC in January of 2014 after leaving a larger institution in another state. Every single day I drive to that school, I think about how truly grateful I am that I was offered a second chance at a good education. MCC gave me an opportunity that I could not get anywhere else.

Our tuition has been on the rise for years. Just two years ago, in 2013, the Connecticut Board of Regents for Higher Education increased our tuition by 5.1%, or about \$188 per community college student, after a 15% budget cut. Now, tuition is going to be increased by as much as 16%, or about \$618 per community college student, after a proposed cut of about \$20 million.

Money is not easy to come by for college students. Some people I know are not being paid anywhere near enough money to have a living wage, let alone go to college and get a degree. And financial aid cannot cover everything students need to pay for in school. Asking students for an extra \$618 may not be possible for them.

If you go through with this, less students will be able to have the feeling of gratitude that I get when I drive to school. They won't be able to think to themselves, "you know what, I'm pretty lucky to be here. I'm lucky that I can pay less for college and get a great education." And the reason why that will be is because they can't afford it.

Thank you.