

State Vocational Federation of Teachers

P.O. Box 4548
Yalesville, CT 06492

Phone: (203) 793-7996
1-800-378-8020
Fax: (203) 793-7943
Web Site: www.svft.ct.aft.org

Testimony of Emily Lozinak
Math Teacher, Platt THS, CTHSS

**Proposed Bill 7212: AN ACT CONCERNING THE
PROMOTION OF LOAN FORGIVENESS PROGRAMS**

Committee on Higher Education and Employment Advancement
March 9, 2017

Chairpersons Bye, Linares, and Haddad, and members of the Committee:

My name is Emily Lozinak, and I am a math teacher at Platt THS in Milford. In my classroom, I look at numbers all day, but the numbers I used in preparation to testify today really discouraged me. After almost seven years of teaching, paying \$700 a month, I still owe over \$50,000 in student loans. I have barely made a dent in what I owe. This debt hangs over every financial decision I make.

When I investigate loan forgiveness programs or income-based payment plans, I'm inevitably frustrated. I am regularly told I am ineligible for any type of relief, and that none of the existing programs can help me. Of course, primarily the people who are telling me this are my lenders. It is far from certain that they are truly looking out for my best interests. Why would they? They are certainly happy to take my \$700 a month until 2028, when it is due to be paid off. Bill 7212 has provisions which would make certain I am receiving the correct information I need to make informed financial decisions. Under this bill, the Student Loan Ombudsman would create and distribute information which would explain all of the Public Service and Teacher Loan Forgiveness Programs currently available. I am sure there are many programs I know nothing about and may qualify for, but there is no central location to check out what is available. This bill would ensure I receive a letter notifying me of the eligibility and participation requirements of Public Service Programs. I would find such information invaluable.

Studies show only a small fraction of people eligible for loan forgiveness programs or income-based payment plans participate in them. Our failure to enroll in these programs is not because we are lazy or incapable of filling out forms; we do not enroll in programs because we do not know they exist. Lenders have a financial interest in keeping this information from us. But it is not only individuals like myself who would benefit from the transparency this bill would require; Connecticut's economy would benefit as well. Every month I send \$700 out of State that would otherwise circulate in Connecticut businesses. The effects are long-term as well. Student loans make it difficult to adequately save for retirement, so these loans will have an impact long into the future. There is no doubt student debt is crippling people like me. It is a drain on the economy. I strongly support Bill 7212: An Act Concerning the Promotion of Loan Forgiveness Programs as an important first step to alleviating this crisis. Thank you.