Joint Subcommittee on Education
Montana State Capitol
Helena, MT

January 23, 2025

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Catrina Olson, and I am a second year Substance Abuse Counseling student working toward an Associate of Arts degree at Flathead Valley Community College (FVCC). I will finish my last semester this spring with plans to become a substance abuse counselor in Kalispell, Montana. Upon completion of my degree, I also intend to pursue my Bachelor of Art degree in Mental Health Counseling becoming dual licensed to best serve my clients. My journey has exposed me to the horrors of human trafficking, substance abuse, the loss of a child. I moved from Pablo to Kalispell with a backpack and a baby and began making a new life for myself and my daughter. I found low-income housing and a job and began my comeback. I realized that for me to achieve my goals and support myself and my daughter I would need a degree. FVCC was the place for me to begin that journey which started in Medical Office Management and then I found my true calling to help others who are experiencing the challenges of substance abuse. I feel very fortunate to have received scholarships and financial aid that helped me on my path.

The financial support for higher education in Montana is a testament to the health and vitality of our state. We want to build a better future for all Montanans and education is a key component. I was given an opportunity to create a more secure future for my family because of my local community college. Soon I will be a Licensed Addiction Counselor, caring for my community, and I know my future clients will be better served because of my education at FVCC.

Thank you for recognizing students' needs for quality instruction to best serve our communities. And for seeing that community colleges allow us to make significant changes in our lives without having to go into debt or move our family. With your help I am achieving my dream of becoming Licensed Addiction Counselor and look forward to serving the Flathead Valley.

I am lucky to live here in Kalispell, and I am thankful my family joined this community. To live in this great state is special, and I am so glad this is where I decided to raise my children. I hope to call this home for a long time. Thank you for your time and the future you give our state through supporting higher education and my local community college, FVCC.

Sincerely,

Catrina Olson

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