

PETER WELCH
AT-LARGE, VERMONT

COMMITTEE ON
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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4501

January 25, 2010

Mr. Donald R. Vickers
President & CEO
Vermont Student Assistance Corp.
PO Box 2000
Winooski, VT 05404-2601

Dear Mr. Vickers,

Thank you for your kind invitation to participate in today's presentation of VSAC's "Voices Project." To read through these many testimonials is to confirm what I have always known about VSAC: you make an important difference. You have supported students and families through your outreach, counseling, financial assistance, and, most importantly, customer service, and these voices affirm your positive impact.

From my work with constituents, I thought I might add some voices to your collection:

Marita found a job in her the local elementary school and wanted to enroll in courses through UVM Continuing Education. She worked with VSAC counselors to complete applications for grant support. Without their help she wouldn't have enrolled in the program since her family cannot afford the extra expenses of college courses.

Sandra defaulted on her private student loans which were in the hands of a collections agency. A VSAC counselor advocated for Sandra with the agency in order to set up a new payment plan. With VSAC's help, Sandra got back into the classroom at CCV and continued to pay her student loans.

Tim had many jobs over the years and never finished his college education. Now enrolled, Tim meets with his VSAC counselor regularly to check in. He believes that without his counselor he wouldn't have stuck with school. He was always the kid who was afraid to jump, but with VSAC he has gotten that little push he needs to make that big leap.

In the last year, we have learned not to take VSAC's services for granted.

The move to direct lending for all student loans is an attempt to address increasingly high tuition costs which are squeezing families and limiting their ability to send their sons and

daughters to college. Congress must address this issue as an economic priority for the middle class.

I am very concerned, however, about the impact of this change on the ability of VSAC to do its important work in Vermont. That is why I offered an amendment to H.R. 3221 to help ensure that non-profit lenders like VSAC can continue to provide valuable services. My amendment will allow the new State Innovation Completion Grants to be used for borrower services such as delinquency prevention and default aversion.

I will only echo what you've offered here today in your Voices Project: thank you for the leadership you have provided on behalf of generations of Vermonters aspiring to improve their lives and their communities through higher education.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Welch", written in a cursive style.

PETER WELCH
Member of Congress

PW/vj