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MAY 06 2011



MEMO

**Senate of Pennsylvania**

**DATE:** May 6, 2011  
**TO:** All Members  
**FROM:** Senator Bob Mensch *RB*  
**SUBJECT:** Co-Sponsorship #6 - The Pennsylvania Community College Affordability Task Force

**COMMITTEES**  
PUBLIC HEALTH AND WELFARE, VICE CHAIR  
APPROPRIATIONS  
COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY  
INTER-GOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS  
VETERANS AFFAIRS AND  
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS  
CHILDREN'S TRUST FUND BOARD  
LEGISLATIVE BUDGET AND  
FINANCE COMMITTEE

I am introducing legislation to create the Pennsylvania Community College Affordability Task force within the Department of Education.

As you are aware, our community colleges provide a great economic option for an entry-level college education to many Pennsylvanians who could not afford their first two years of higher education otherwise. They also provide much-needed workforce development for individuals who need additional skill sets in order to remain marketable and relevant in the workplace. Community colleges serve a large number of students in need of remedial education so they are better prepared to succeed in their efforts to obtain a degree.

Community colleges are currently funded through a formula that aims to keep student tuition at no more than 1/3 of the educational cost. The remainder comes from state funding and local sponsorship which is from either school districts or counties. When either the local share or the state funding is reduced, the financial burden is placed on the students.

Currently, four community colleges are sponsored by school districts and ten are sponsored by counties. With many school districts and counties reevaluating their local sponsorship, I feel it is imperative the Commonwealth take a serious look at how changes in the local share could affect the affordability of a community college education.

My legislation, which is supported by the Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges, creates a task force of stakeholders to examine the statutory requirements for local sponsorship and make recommendations regarding the sustainability of local sponsorship. Recommendations will include interim and long-term steps to stabilize funding and ensure that long-term affordability of a community college education for Pennsylvania residents. The task force will be chaired by the Secretary of Education and will have representatives of the Department of Labor and Industry's Workforce Investment Board, community colleges, county commissioners and school districts who are local sponsors, as well as members of the House and Senate and two representatives of the business community who will be appointed by the Governor. Members will have 180 days to issue findings and recommendations.

If you would like to join me in sponsoring this legislation, please call my office at 787-3110 or email Geri Sarfert at [gsarfert@pasen.gov](mailto:gsarfert@pasen.gov).

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