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**State Government Committee Meeting  
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Thank you Mr. Chairman and Members of the State Government Committee for hosting this public hearing on my legislation. I appreciate the opportunity to inform everyone about the legislation.

I think everyone agrees that post secondary education is critical for anyone who wishes to obtain gainful employment that provides a living wage. We are very fortunate in Pennsylvania to have the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. PASSHE plays a vital role in post secondary college education in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for over 120,000 students. Although PASSHE tuition rates are lower than other state school systems, I am concerned that based on current practices, we will lose that distinction.

The CPI increased 1.7% from May of 2011 to May of 2012 which means the inflation rate was 1.7%. PASSHE then raised tuition by 3% and stated it was "within the inflation rate. This hearing is about legislation that would prevent these unaffordable tuition increases.

The last union contract gave first year tenured professors an 8.15% raise in 2008, an 8.15% raise in 2009, and a 9.20% raise in 2010. A 25.5% pay raise in three years is very rare among most of the families of PASSHE students. Full time was considered teaching just 12 hours a week compared to the 25 hours a week an average high school teacher has to teach. The president of each campus union only had to work 75% of that schedule and still received full pay and benefits. 7% of the professors could be on full pay and full benefits sabbatical at any given time and children of PASSHE employees received free tuition. I hope the new union contract does not give away the store like the prior one did.

I have introduced the Keep Tuition Affordable bill package in an attempt to keep a college education affordable for low income and moderate income students in Pennsylvania. The goal of my Keep Tuition Affordable bill package is to prevent tuition increases by reducing costs. All 10 pieces of legislation put the student first since PASSHE universities are there for the students. Today's hearing will be focused on the four bills that are before the State Government Committee.

The first bill I would like to summarize is HB2443. It ensures that all students are treated on an equal basis when it comes to paying tuition.

PASSHE gives away about \$10 million a year in free tuition to children of their employees. The costs do not go away just because a student is related to a professor, the costs get added into the tuition that the other students have to pay. All students should be treated the same, regardless of their race, their gender, their religion, or where there parents work. HB2443 would end the practice of about 1% of the students getting free tuition and the other 99% paying higher tuition to make up for it. It would save the average student about \$83 a year if all students starting paying tuition.

It seems odd that children of farmers, factory workers, truck drivers, and office workers have to pay tuition but children of tenured college professors who earn over \$100,000 a year get free tuition for their kids. HB2443 would level the playing field.

The second bill is HB2444. It would stop the frivolous construction pandemic that is crippling PASSHE finances. A classic example of frivolous construction is the several million dollar raised walkway at Edinboro University. The several hundred foot long project will connect two buildings together that are on opposite ends of the campus. It is basically an enclosed outdoor hallway. Nice, but not necessary.

There is now \$535 million of construction taking place at the 14 PASSHE colleges. (Handout) \$42 million for a gym renovation at Clarion, \$30 million for an auditorium renovation at Slippery Rock, and \$16 million for a library renovation at Millersville are examples of projects PASSHE is working on now during this period of economic challenges. Almost \$1 billion in debt has been accumulated from dozens of construction projects that have limited impact on classroom learning. It takes over \$60 million a year in loan payments to pay off \$1 billion over 20 years, so you can see that this debt service is causing financial problems. It works out to about \$500 per student per year to pay off the \$1 billion.

HB2444 would establish a two year moratorium on frivolous construction. PASSHE could continue frivolous construction in the future, but would have to be responsible for the next two years. Roof repairs, water and sewer projects, boiler replacements, etc. would be allowed to continue since they are necessary projects. I think most people would agree that good professors and not fancy buildings are the most important thing on a college campus.

The third bill is HB2442. It would allow students who focus on academics to opt out of paying the Student Activity Fee. The Student Activity Fee ranges from \$300 to \$900 a year at the various PASSHE colleges. (Handout) That means that over a five year period, which is the average time students spend to earn a bachelors degree, the Student Activity Fee adds up to \$4,500 to the cost of earning a college degree.

Students who join fraternities, play intramural sports, attend concerts on campus, participate in student trips, and so on could continue to pay up to \$900 a year for that privilege. They would continue to pay for the services they are using.

Students who spend their time going to class, studying, and working part time jobs would be able to opt out of paying the Student Activity Fee since they do not engage in those activities. They could save up to \$900 a year on college costs if they opted out of paying the fee. It is only right that students should not have to pay for things they are not using.

The final bill for today's hearing is HB2446. It would end the practice of 7% of the professors being off on paid salary and paid benefit sabbaticals at any given time. Students are required to pay 100% of their tuition, so they should get 100% of their professors, not 93% of them.

PASSHE colleges are good at what they do; they teach people to become teachers, nurses, business people, etc. PASSHE colleges are not research institutions like Penn State, Pitt, Carnegie Mellon, etc.

Paid sabbaticals make sense for research institutions where most of the students have majors in engineering, science, chemistry, physics, etc. If a nuclear physics professor takes a six month paid leave to observe at a nuclear power plant and then brings back those experiences to the classroom, the students benefit.

If a poetry professor takes a six month leave to study poetry in Uruguay, it is of questionable value in the classroom. Most PASSHE students have majors such as education, art, music, business, etc. which do not necessitate paid sabbaticals.

Just at Edinboro University there were 9 professors on paid sabbatical leave during the spring 2012 semester. That was just at 1 of 14 colleges, so at all of them there may have been over 100 out on paid sabbaticals. HB2446 would put a halt to these paid sabbaticals and keep the professors in the classroom where they would teach students.

These four pieces of legislation would help to keep tuition affordable and I hope that the committee members will support these proposals.

Thank you for allowing me to testify and I would be happy to answer any questions that committee members have right now or at any time during the hearing.