

Kaitlin Szymkowicz

I would like to thank Chairman McNamara and members of the Education Committee for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Kaitlin Szymkowicz, and I am a senior at Toll Gate High School in Warwick. I am also a student at New England Institute of Technology through the Early College Program.

Entering my junior year, I was already anxious to leave the high school environment and start my college career. I looked into the early college opportunities offered through my high school at the Community College of Rhode Island. Looking through my options, I saw that most of the classes offered would be very similar to what I was on track to take in high school. These were courses focused on English, math, and the sciences. This was not for me. I was looking to dive right into the college experience, to be hands on and active in all my classes.

That is when I found out New England Tech had started an Early College Program last year. I had already been planning to attend there after I graduated but jumped on the opportunity to go a year early. Since day one, I have been fully immersed in my field of choice, digital media production. I have been able to use the equipment and talk to the professionals in my field in a way I never was able to in high school. The financial aspect is very important as well. Through the early college program, half of my associates degree is covered through my school district. This leaves me not only ahead of my peers academically, but financially as well. I can now put that money towards furthering my education and continuing onto a bachelor's degree.

By limiting early college funding to only public state institutions, many students would be missing out on a unique, and for some life changing opportunity, to attend a career focused college. Without the opportunities and classes, I've been offered this past year through the early college program, I would not have been able to sit and speak in front of you today. Thank you for your time.