

Chairperson Topper, council members, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Jamie Gilligan, and I am a junior nursing student at the University of Pittsburgh. I want to share how the state-funded in-state tuition discount has made it possible for me to pursue my education and how it will allow me to give back to Pennsylvania as a future healthcare professional.

Like many students, affordability was among the biggest factors in my decision to attend college. Pitt's in-state tuition discount has allowed me to stay in Pennsylvania, close to my family and community, while receiving a world-class education without an overwhelming financial burden. Without this opportunity, affording tuition would have been much more challenging and I would have attended school out of state due to competitive scholarship offers.

Pennsylvania is facing a growing need for skilled healthcare workers, and I am committed to being part of the solution. After graduating, I plan to stay in the state and work as a nurse, helping address the demand for healthcare professionals in our hospitals and communities. The Pitt school of nursing has not only set me up for jobs within the city of Pittsburgh, but also my internship this summer at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Pitt teaches the importance of clinical experience by equipping students with research opportunities and partnering with companies like UPMC to create jobs for medical and non-medical students alike to participate in. The state's investment in students like me through the in-state tuition discount directly impacts Pennsylvania's workforce and strengthens our healthcare system.

I urge the council to maintain keeping higher education accessible and affordable for in-state students and encourage them to stay local after graduation. By doing so, you are not only helping students like me achieve their future goals but also ensuring Pennsylvania retains the talent it needs in critical fields like healthcare.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to our University and the state of Pennsylvania.