



**For Immediate Release**

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**SHERRELL TO DISCUSS HIGHER EDUCATION AFFORDABILITY WITH COLLEGE STUDENTS DURING LENDA LISTENS TOUR STOP IN SMYRNA**

**(Murfreesboro, Tenn., August 21, 2014)** – College affordability and accessibility are among education issues Democratic candidate for Congressional District 4 Lenda Sherrell will discuss following a tour of the Motlow State Community College. The event takes place 11:30 a.m., Friday, August 22, at Fat Mo’s Burgers, 298 Sam Ridley Parkway, Suite 100, in Smyrna.

“More and more, college students are finding themselves stuck in a vicious cycle. Many will have to take loans to attain a degree and pathway to the American Dream since college graduates tend to earn more those with a high school diploma or less. But the amount of debt can often be debilitating as food, transportation and the cost of renting or house payments add to an already stressed-budget with an economy that has shifted from middle-class jobs to ones that pay a minimum wage even for college graduates,” said Sherrell. “Community colleges such as Motlow State provide a way for students to keep down the costs of higher education but more needs to be done to address student tuition and loans for those seeking four-year degrees.”

Across the country, total student loan debt increased by \$124 billion to \$1.2 trillion this year. According to a report by The Project on Student Debt, the average 2014 graduate left school with \$33,000 in debt — two times the amount from 20 years ago. Here in Tennessee, the average debt is \$21,775.

“There was a time when young people didn’t have to pile on loans in order to obtain a college degree. Ask their parents and grandparents. I remember such a time because I was one of those who didn’t have to,” added Sherrell. “Debt should never be a deterrent to a better future, a better life and the American Dream.”

The cost of higher education has risen four times faster than the Consumer Price Index — 1,120 percent in the last 35 years. While most community college students don’t need to borrow money to pay for their education, 17 percent of students do take out loans for expenses that aren’t fully covered by federal Pell grants. Thirty-seven percent of community college associate degree graduates have federal loans.

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