



STATEMENT REGARDING
Senate Bill 136: An Act Concerning New and Revised Academic Programs of Nonprofit Independent Institutions of Higher Education

Higher Education & Workforce Advancement Committee
March 9, 2010

The membership of the MetroHartford Alliance is representative of businesses of all sizes, health care providers, and institutions of higher education, as well as 34 municipalities. Our mission is to ensure that the Hartford Region competes as one of the country's premier places for all people to live, work, play, and raise a family. On behalf of our members, we ask for your support of Senate Bill 136: "*An Act Concerning New and Revised Academic Programs of Nonprofit Independent Institutions of Higher Education.*"

This bill streamlines Connecticut's regulatory process by removing the requirement that private non-profit colleges and universities licensed in Connecticut seek approval from the Department of Higher Education (DHE) prior to offering academic programs. Thirty-nine other states already have no such requirement, and the remaining states have only limited review or review done solely by exception. The approval process in Connecticut can delay enrollment in a new program as long as a year. As an organization focused on talent retention and attraction, we realize that the cost of living in Connecticut is already a serious disadvantage for our young people. Our population of 18-34 year-olds has been eroding for several years, and this is a strong negative in our efforts to recruit business to our state. To be able to offer students timely, cutting edge high demand educational opportunities is an important counter to the challenge

of cost of living. If we can keep our young people in state for college, we stand a stronger chance at retaining them beyond graduation and ultimately reversing our aging demographics.

Additionally, our institutions of higher education work collaboratively with the business community to ensure that the educational needs of our workforce are being met. When developing new programs, our private colleges and universities consider market viability and also incorporate and develop potential pipelines from our community colleges to ensure that new offerings help prepare future graduates for careers in legitimate growth areas where employment opportunities are anticipated to be increasing. Meanwhile, both colleges and employers collaborate to connect our future workforce with internship, research and other employment opportunities, which completes a balanced education and builds a bridge between education inside the classroom and opportunities to apply that education to the workforce.

Working together, the higher education and business communities in Connecticut can help keep us competitive for talent and, therefore, long term economic growth. Being able to show site selection consultants the depth of our knowledgeable workforce is of vital importance to us as we solicit them to move jobs to our state. Currently it can take up to a year for a school to be able to admit students to a new program. Given the economic challenges we are facing, we need to take every step possible to ensure that we are current and focused on attracting and retaining talent. We ask you to help us in our economic development efforts and support *"An Act Concerning New and Revised Academic Programs of Nonprofit Independent Institutions of Higher Education."*