

Written Testimony
Appropriations Committee Public Hearing
February 28, 2011

I am a proud 1993 graduate of Manchester Community College (MCC). I subsequently earned degrees from the University of Connecticut and Harvard University, but my financial contributions as an alumna are given exclusively to MCC. MCC is the educational institution that really made a difference in my life. During the two years I served as the elected Student Trustee on the Connecticut Community College Board of Trustees, I saw that Connecticut Community Colleges made a difference in the lives of thousands of our citizens every year; not one or two thousand, but more than fifty thousand! Those students go on to be productive citizens who help others. Here's a sampling from just one generation of one of Connecticut's extended families – my family.

My daughter Beth might save the life one of your relatives – she's a paramedic in the Manchester, East Hartford and Glastonbury areas. She also teaches Emergency Medical Technician classes as well as Hartford Hospital cardiac doctors and nurses their new protocols. She went from MCC (General Studies) to Mount Holyoke (BA - Math) to the University of Boston (MA - Public Health), then back to Capital Community College for both paramedic and teaching certifications.

My daughter Rebecca teaches students at Connecticut high schools how to prepare for the Scholastic Aptitude Tests. Perhaps she has already taught children, nieces and/or nephews of yours to be successful. She went from MCC (General Studies) to Lesley University (BA and MA) to Goddard College (MA in Fine Arts.)

My nephew Jamie, a police officer in Farmington, keeps residents safe.

My nephew Stephen, manager for the Marriott Corporation, possibly made sure you were well treated, comfortable and safe during your stay there or during a conference or seminar.

My niece Tara was a pastry chef at the well-known Cavey's Restaurant in Manchester until she started her own business.

My niece Lauren does therapeutic recreation with senior citizens at a local nursing home.

My nephew Tom is an ophthalmologist. He went from MCC to a college in Massachusetts for a BA.

My nephew Nick took several High School Partnership courses at MCC while studying at Howell Cheney Technical High School. He became Valedictorian and moved on to UConn. Google tried to get him to move from Connecticut to work for them in New York. He declined.

After graduation from MCC, my niece Sarah earned her Bachelor's Degree at Central.

My nephew David graduated and is enrolled at Eastern.

With the exception of my daughters, all these family members were first-generation Connecticut Community College students. Sixty percent of them earned bachelor's and/or master's degrees. All are gainfully employed and all but two are employed within the State of Connecticut. Overall, Connecticut Community College students tend to STAY in Connecticut. They live and work and raise families here.

They are homeowners, taxpayers, and voters. They are contributors to the economy and to the public good and they need your full and fair financial support.

We do need to get the state budget under control in order to reduce our huge debt. It is simply not logical, however, to reduce the funding so drastically and so disproportionately for the people who need our Community Colleges. Underprepared, low income, traditional and non-traditional aged, and almost 70% of all minority undergraduates in Connecticut public higher education go to Community Colleges to seek a chance at a stable future. And they are coming from public high schools in cities and towns all over the state.

Unlike the other Connecticut higher education institutions, Community Colleges provide open access for all students with a high school diploma or equivalency diploma. High school students are repeatedly told by their parents, their high schools, and the media to go to college in order to get a good paying job and to have a good future. Many high school students, however, are taught at the General Level rather than the College Preparation Level. Those students have not been *taught* to go to college. So they enroll at the local Community College.

What do we – collectively – do for these students? They can't go to Central, Eastern or UConn, because they are not prepared; that is understandable. But what do we - legislators, educators, parents - do for these students? They need (and we need them) to be able to read, write and compute. What jobs will they be able to get that will sustain them and their families? What kind of citizen do we want and need to keep our economy and our democracy alive and well?

To severely reduce funding for Community Colleges disproportionate to other units of higher education is not logical, but more importantly, it is just not the right decision for our citizens most in need of higher education.

Harvard rests on their endowment. UConn has their basketball. These other alma maters do not need my money – or legislative money – in the same way that Connecticut Community Colleges need your fullest and fair support. Our citizens - your constituents - are relying on you. Thank you for your serious consideration of these issues and for all you do for the people of the State of Connecticut.

Sincerely,

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