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Louise Brown
Testimony for the Community College System
February 28, 2011

Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Walker, distinguished Vice-Chairs, Ranking Members, and all others serving this committee, you have an unenviable and daunting task in these trying times.

My name is Louise Brown. I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify for the continued support of the community college system – specifically, Quinebaug Valley Community College.

My career as a business woman was abruptly cut short in the 1990s, when I was stricken with a debilitating illness. While I have overcome the disease, I live with the permanent damage it has done to all the joints in my body.

In the fall of 2000, I was at home taking care of our son when my husband asked, “Why don’t you go to QV and take a couple of courses?”

Quinebaug Valley Community College is located about ten minutes from my home. I mustered up the courage to walk in as a returning non-traditional student, wife and mother, with physical limitations. The staff, faculty, and administration, from top down, could not have been nicer and more reassuring. They were very supportive and eager to help me start my journey.

I worked countless hours in the Learning Center, Library, Computer Lab, and at my kitchen table. I forged ahead with my education and maintained a high grade point average. I worked collaboratively, forming study groups in all subjects – math, science, philosophy, etc. I helped tutor others and encouraged group success. The resources at QVCC were critical to our success – the computer access, staff and tutors ready to answer technology and curriculum questions.

This supportive staff and faculty talked me into being a student worker in the Learning Center. This opportunity allowed me to grow professionally. I fine-tuned my tutoring skills and gained knowledge of all aspects of a learning center – proctoring exams, assisting faculty, and much more. I worked with many students on financial aid wanting to move ahead and have a better life.

My efforts allowed me to qualify for Connecticut Community College grants which funded my education at QVCC. The financial aid department was actively involved and made sure I received the appropriate funding. Even though, I was not eligible for the Federal Pell grant, I was eligible for the CAP grant for which 15% of allowable funds to go to eligible community college student recipients. I would not have been able to move forward if it was not for this program. Student loans are a difficult decision to make. In 2004, I graduated at the top of my class, earning the President’s Award and the Foundations’ State of Connecticut medallion. The knowledge, skills, abilities, support, and confidence I gained at QVCC gave me the tools and strength to continue my education at the University of Connecticut.

I earned my Bachelor's degree at UConn in 2008, again graduating at the top of my class. QVCC could not get rid of me☺. During these years, I continued to work in the Learning Center helping countless individuals achieve their goals. The importance of one-on-one assistance necessary for individuals to succeed in the community college system cannot be stressed enough. The individuals I helped were grateful to have the extra assistance to improve their skills. They confided in me, they were eligible for financial aid that covered all expenses and wanted to continue to be able to complete their education.

Presently, I am on target to earn my Master's Degree at Eastern Connecticut State University this spring. While working for this degree, I worked in the Learning Center, Financial Aid, Enrollment Services, and on the Graduation Committee at QVCC. Currently, I work there as an Embedded Tutor. The Embedded Tutor program is part of a pilot project assisting students with a refresher course to acquire college level writing and math skills. The work involves considerable follow-up and intervention. I hope to continue working in the community college system as a professional tutor or as an instructor. Eventually, I would like to be a director of an administrative office.

I would not have been able to be a successful student and employee for the community college system without the support of my husband, son, family and friends.

More importantly, I would not be here speaking to all of you, if I did not regard the community college system as critical to second chance opportunities. My experience is typical of the one many have. The convenient location, affordable price, and the commitment of the faculty, staff, and administration at Quinebaug Valley Community College is a valuable asset to the State's efforts to re-engineer a competitive workforce. Please consider keeping the funding levels that already exist, in place.

Thank you.